Commentary
June 1999

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Joshua Muravchik

The New Snake Oil: A Field Guide
Samuel McCracken

Guns, Tobacco, Big Macs—and the Courts
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Masterpieces of the Century: A Finale
Terry Teachout

Books in Review
Gabriel Schoenfeld • Daniel Pipes • Michael J. Lewis
Richard A. Samuelson • Algis Valiunas

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Commentary®

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Commentary
June 1999

Letters from Readers

Holocaust Literature

To the Editor:

Cynthia Ozick builds and dwells in a beautiful edifice for most of her essay, "The Rights of History and the Rights of Imagination" [March], only to leave it through a staircase to the basement. She claims that in the novel *Sophie's Choice*, "[William] Styron's Sophie deflects from the total annihilation of Jewish presence in a Poland that continues with its land, language, religion, and institutions intact." But it is difficult to see how this accusation is warranted given the novel's intensive and accurate depiction of Jewish suffering in Auschwitz and its modest description of Polish misery in Warsaw and Auschwitz. In addition, as a Jew born in Poland and a survivor of the camps, I do not see how a fictional character can ever displace the reality of the murder of millions of innocent men, women, and children and the wanton destruction of prewar Poland's vibrant Yiddish life and culture.

More significant is Miss Ozick's question, "How is it possible for a writer to set forth as a purposeful embodiment of the inmost meaning of the camps, any emblem other than a Jewish emblem?" It is one thing for this question to stand as a challenge to both Jewish and non-Jewish writers; it is quite another matter for it to become a new standard for Holocaust fiction. And based on what Miss Ozick attributes to *Sophie's Choice*, it seems that it is the latter that she is proposing. She argues that Sophie is "not so much an individual as she is a counter-individual. She is not so much a character in a novel as she is a softly polemical device to distract us from the epitome."

Although I had last read this novel more than twenty years ago, out of respect for Miss Ozick's wisdom I read it once again, keeping in mind her warnings. I totally disagree with her assertions. Sophie is a fully realized character and not a "stalking horse" for any other character or idea. She is necessary for and expresses well the *internal logic* of *Sophie's Choice*—an outstanding Holocaust novel that gives the lie to Miss Ozick's proposed new standard.

Bernard Otterman
Old Westbury, New York

To the Editor:

As a student and teacher of Holocaust literature who has taught *Sophie's Choice* since 1984, I read Cynthia Ozick's essay with interest. The historical truth that she expects in Holocaust literature is the "purposeful embodiment of the inmost meaning of the camps." But "inmost meaning" is not as universally agreed upon as her essay suggests.

In the Holocaust literature that I have read, the complicated varieties of evil are "the inmost meaning." The essence of the Holocaust experience is evil. It annihilates the soul, destroys beyond the powerful images Miss Ozick uses, beyond "crowns of fire," "skeletal human corpses," and the "terror-stricken little boy with his cap askew and his hands in the air."

Most victims *were* Jewish, and Styron's novel acknowledges that historical truth. But Miss Ozick says that historical fact should prevent Styron from creating an "emblem" who is not Jewish and that Sophie is a "softly polemical device to distract us from the epitome." Readers know that Sophie is not Jewish, but far from "corrupting" history, and even further from "displacing" Anne Frank (as Miss Ozick charges), *Sophie's Choice* illumines a truth about evil that is worthy of our closest attention.

If Sophie as a Polish Catholic is an "anomaly" who "displaces history," as Miss Ozick writes, then her own perspective on history assumes parameters for evil that in historical fact do not

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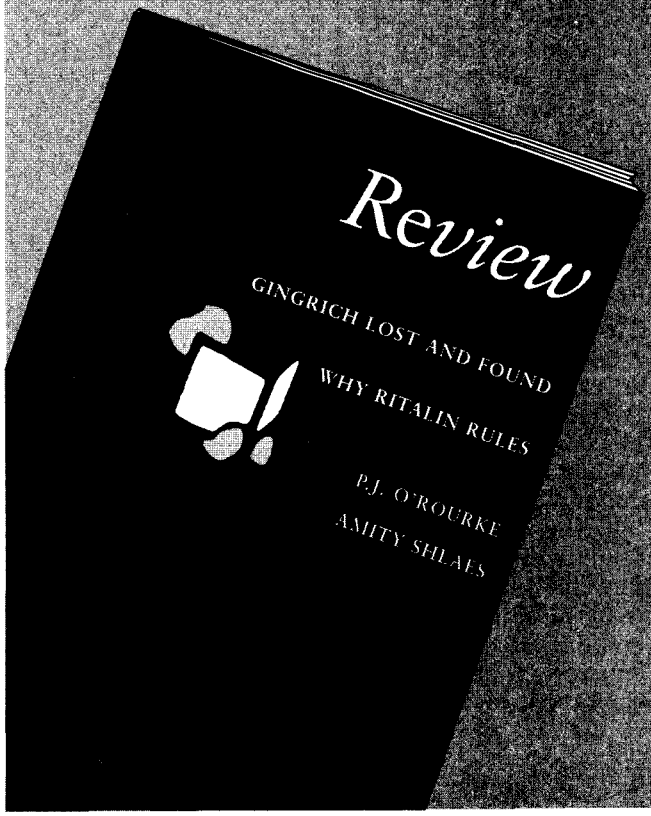

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exist. Christians slaughtered Christians in the American Civil War; Native American Ojibway wiped out Sioux villages throughout the Midwest; Hutu kill Tutsi. The Balkan tragedy speaks for itself. Evil thrives within as well as between religious, ethnic, and racial walls. Kapos were less than honorable in the concentration camps. And that is the historical truth rendered in Styron's novel.

The hundreds of students with whom I have studied *Sophie's Choice* have *never* articulated (or felt) any diminishing of Jewish suffering. On the contrary, the depth of Sophie's anguish intensifies and clarifies the anguish suffered by all of the victims of the Holocaust.

PAUL V. OLSEN
Augustana College
Rock Island, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Cynthia Ozick is right to reject any attempt to create a general view of moral responsibility based upon an example that is so unlikely as to be bizarre, i.e., a woman who accidentally enlists as a guard in a concentration camp because she is illiterate, as in Bernard Schlink's *The Reader*. The tension, of course, is between an accurate account of the Holocaust as we know it and the sympathy that engaging fiction can make us feel for an individual character. The power of literature can make our emotions bend toward an agent who is engaged in the purest of evil.

But perhaps there is a different interpretation of Schlink's novel that Miss Ozick did not consider: could the illiteracy of the protagonist be a metaphor or allegory for the illiteracy of the German soul? Ironically, in a nation that was a world leader in literacy, the soul had been neglected, and was thus (like the protagonist) able to enlist unwittingly for service in the most evil deed. Thus seen, Schlink's novel might not be "about" this woman or her illiteracy, but rather about a nation's failure to educate its soul: her intellect is used as a symbol for the collective spirit.

A.C. SMITH
Ann Arbor, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

Cynthia Ozick's observations on recording the Holocaust are timely and to the point. True, it was necessary to make the world aware of the enormity of the crimes committed against the Jewish people. The written word and the media were the proper tools to employ. But storytelling should never have invaded the realm of the historian.

The Holocaust experts lavished praise and laurels on Binjamin Wilkomirski, the author of *Fragments*. If Holocaust survivors had been asked to give their opinion on the veracity of his story, they would have suggested that the author change the title from *Fragments* to *Figments*. The chance that a four-year-old could survive the ordeal of meandering from place to place in Nazi-occupied Poland for the duration of the war is *nil*. Other children survived, but never under the circumstances described.

Recent inquiries into the author's post-Holocaust curriculum vitae have revealed inconsistencies that cast considerable doubt on his age and origin. But the narrative sinks into the mire of lies and fabrications on its own merits—or rather demerit.

HERMAN F. WOLF
Syracuse, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Cynthia Ozick's wonderful article helped me to focus on a long-felt feeling of uneasiness. It is a shame that she did not include some recent films in her discussion, since their wide dissemination and broad appeal have greater impact on our cultural "reality."

My moral outrage is especially reserved for *Life Is Beautiful*, the movie by Roberto Benigni that has received great praise and awards, including several Oscars. Benigni's imagination, being freer than that of Elie Wiesel or Primo

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Levi, is able to create this "wonderful" story of Jewish suffering in an extermination camp. The general health, cleanliness, and ability of inmates to recover from serious injury while surviving in this camp must have required tremendous imagination indeed—or perhaps an ulterior motive.

To a new generation, not steeped in the indelible horror of the Holocaust, revisionists can use this movie to change slowly and subtly the perceptions of this singular event. Is Benigni complicit with others who attempt to distort future understanding of the Holocaust? Has he also come, in Miss Ozick's words, "not to illumine but to corrupt"?

DAVID ZEBELMAN
Fairport, New York

CYNTHIA OZICK writes:

Bernard Otterman asserts that my essay proposes "a new standard for Holocaust fiction." I cannot fathom what "new standard" he has in mind. There has always been only one serious historical standard for fiction concerned with the Holocaust: that such fiction should understand precisely what is meant by that term. There were many victims of Nazism, the Poles painfully and prominently among them. Let us make no mistake about this, and let us not minimize a nation's suffering, and the murder of thousands. But what defines the Holocaust, and distinguishes it from multiple other large-scale victimizations of the Nazi period, is not only the intent to annihilate every last living Jew, from the moribund elderly in nursing homes down to newborn infants, but also, and preeminently, the total erasure of European Jewish civilization— language, culture, institutions.

As "a Jew born in Poland and a survivor of the camps," Mr. Otterman surely knows the difference between the brutal invasion of a country (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Holland, etc.) and the achieved extirpation of an entire civilization. In the aftermath of the German occupation, Polish land, language, and Church were still extant. Mr. Otterman, in contrast, has fled the land of his birth, has perforce acquired a language other than his native tongue, and is wholly aware that Poland's (and Europe's) long-established Jewish academies, libraries, and social and religious bodies are no more. By this criterion—and it is the only historically factual one—he is wrong to style *Sophie's Choice*, with its Polish Catholic protagonist, a Holocaust novel. The invasion and occupation of Poland was deeply cruel; but the Holocaust is not about the invasion and occupation of one nation by another. A Holocaust novel, to earn that designation, must touch solely on those who were subject to the Final Solution, which was aimed only at Jews.

"I totally disagree with her assertions," Mr. Otterman writes of my observations; yet he speaks exactly as I do when he mourns "the wanton destruction of prewar Poland's Yiddish life and culture." As to the fictional Sophie, he finds her to be "a fully realized character." This must mean that for Mr. Otterman she is fully situated in her identity as a Catholic Pole. Accordingly, he concludes that a fully realized fictional Catholic Pole cannot "displace the reality of the murder of millions" of Jews. That is my very point; and it is the source of my dissent from this aspect of Styron's novel.

It is particularly regrettable—because he is a teacher and influences new generations—that Paul V. Olsen falls identically into the all too common error of blurring distinctions when he states that "most victims were Jewish." No; *all* victims of the Holocaust were Jews. The Nuremberg laws and the Final Solution, which are the defining elements of what has come to

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be known as the Holocaust, were directed at Jews and Jews only (how often must this be emphasized?). In a speech in January 1939, Hitler looked forward to "the annihilation [*Vernichtung*] of the Jewish race in Europe"; nothing could be more explicit. That is why Mr. Olsen, contrary to his empathic conviction, is not teaching "Holocaust literature" if he is under the impression that the subject of such a literature is the prevalence of evil. The subject of an authentic Holocaust literature is the plan to wipe out the Jews of Europe (how often must this be reiterated?). That is the "inmost meaning" of the Holocaust; nothing else. Why is there so much resistance to (I will not say denial of) this self-evident historical datum?

Evil manifests itself in this and that population, yes, and too frequently in the form of genocide or attempted genocide. These distinct events deserve their own definitions and commemorations. But the Holocaust cannot be generalized into abstract Evil, or handled as a kind of template to be laid over every atrocity in the record of man's inhumanity to man. To generalize is to expunge. The Holocaust is recognizable only in its own terms; it signifies what was done to the Jews of Europe at a specific time by a specific regime and its specific supporters. To use the Holocaust to symbolize, typify, exemplify, or allegorize is to dilute and obscure, even to crush, its historicity. If Mr. Olsen is moved to teach Holocaust literature, he would do better to assign the reading of Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*, or Lawrence Langer's excellent anthology, *Art from the Ashes*. And for the sake of his students' clarity he should not confuse the Holocaust—wherein hatred went in one direction only and a nation murdered its own unarmed and passionately loyal citizens—with the American Civil War, or with Native American or African tribal conflicts, in which two sides, both well equipped with weapons and reciprocal enmity, clashed in mutual fury.

A.C. Smith's metaphorical version of *The Reader*—illiteracy standing for moral illiteracy—would certainly save Bernhard Schlink's novel, if only there were internal evidence for it. On the contrary, Mr. Schlink's unlettered protagonist is depicted throughout as *yearning* for the bookish world of moral intellect; how can this be a metaphor for blindness to it?

To Herman F. Wolf's discussion of the Wilkomirski controversy, one might add a bit of updating. Defending an award recently bestowed on Wilkomirski's *Fragments* by the American Orthopsychiatric Association (many members of which are Jews), one psychologist stated: "We are honoring Mr. Wilkomirski not as historians or politicians, but as mental-health professionals. What he has written is important clinically." From this it would be fair to conclude that "mental-health professionals" care nothing for historical evidence, and do not recognize when they are, in fact, acting politically. If Mr. Wilkomirski is indeed a fabricator, then to laud him is to take a stand—politically—on the side of those who insist that the Holocaust is fabrication. In any case, how does it advance the public cause of mental health to encourage a possible public liar who is possibly an opportunist and possibly a madman?

David Zebelman, while he is right on target otherwise, overlooks the most insidious threat to what has been called "the future of the Holocaust"—and that is Roberto Benigni's open and obvious and exuberant good will. Unfortunately, when a benevolent intent accompanies an outrageous distortion of documented truth, a precedent is set for the gradual erosion of an honest and honorable historical perspective. It was Benigni's film that inspired the Public Theater's Com-

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munity Affairs Department to sponsor a panel discussion on "Humor and the Holocaust." This event was designed to promote Lisa Kron's "solo show," *2.5 Minute Ride*, which juxtaposes a visit to an Ohio amusement park with a visit to Auschwitz. A letter from the Public Theater describes the show as "by turns audacious, moving, and very funny." As for the panel itself, its purpose was to "address an issue that is central to Lisa's work and to films like *Life is Beautiful*—namely, how contemporary artists are using humor and comedy as a context through which audiences can bear witness to the Holocaust more than 50 years later."

So here we are, more than 50 years later. On the one hand, evil is (as Allen Ginsberg once described the world's religions) alleesamee. And on the other hand: ha ha ha.

Liberty & Property

TO THE EDITOR:

Richard Pipes's "Life, Liberty, Property" [March] could easily evoke in the critical reader a response too lengthy for any letters section. I will, therefore, deal only with his most provocative points.

Mr. Pipes writes that "Liberty is by its nature inegalitarian, because living creatures differ in [capacity]." Isaiah Berlin made the same point, but less abstractly: "Liberty for the pike is death for the trout."

He argues that the "economic rights of citizens (rights to property)" are essential to their "civil rights (rights to equal treatment)." But to say that the poor in a liberal society have the "right" to possess any property that they acquire—though they are incapable of doing so by virtue of their poverty—is at best meaningless. What counts in supporting civil rights is only the actual property possessed.

He also states that "acquiring property is the universal engine of prosperity." Yes—and of poverty as well. As Proudhon observed a century and a half ago, there are two kinds of property: the property of the peasant, the carpenter, and the mechanic, which gives them the means to work; and the property of the landholder and factory owner, which forces others to work for them. The result of the second form of property—the interest of Mr. Pipes—is the dichotomy between the ostentatious prosperity of the few and the (relative or absolute) poverty of the many.

Mr. Pipes believes that "Democracy . . . cannot do without" property. On the contrary, capitalist property undermines the realization of democracy. The words of Mikhail Bakunin, written over a century ago, remain virtually undisputed: "Where universal suffrage is exercised . . . [under circumstances in which] the mass of workers is economically dominated by a minority that controls the property and capital of the society, . . . elections can only be illusory and antidemocratic in their results."

Finally, Mr. Pipes states that "liberty cannot flourish when property and the inequality to which it gives rise are forcibly eliminated." This contains an inconvenient antimony: material property is a good in limited supply and thus its unlimited acquisition by the strong and the clever can only be achieved at the cost of depriving those who are less well endowed. In other words, for human beings as for fish, the "liberty" of the few means inhibiting the liberty of the many.

J.W. BARCHFIELD
University of Guanajuato
Guanajuato, Mexico

TO THE EDITOR:

Richard Pipes's "Life, Liberty, Property" is a fine defense of John Locke, from whom the article's title is borrowed. But the United States was founded on an entirely different set of principles. When Jefferson, a man not given to careless writing, changed Locke's phrase to read "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," he did so with a purpose.

If the pursuit of happiness expresses itself in some people as the pursuit of property, so be it—until such pursuit begins to inhibit the ability of others in our society to pursue their own brand of happiness. And that is exactly what is occurring in this country. The gap in wealth between those at the top of American society and those at the bottom is at an all-time high and is widening at an alarming rate. The wealthiest country in the history of the world cannot take care of its elderly, mentally ill, poor, disabled, or even its babies.

Most of this failure can be attributed to the fact that a significant portion of our population is effectively denied access to the minimal property they need by a small portion of our population that seems intent on hoarding wealth. We live in a world of limited, not unlimited, resources, and some people are driven to acquire disproportionate amounts of those resources. These people can—through altruism, righteousness, or even a simple survival instinct—voluntarily find ways to return wealth to the populace from whom they gathered it, or they can face the fact that government or the people will ultimately rise up and take it from them.

DAN KACSIR
Indianapolis, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR:

Richard Pipes's generally excellent essay on the interrelationship between liberty and property is marred by a somewhat dated view of what the courts have been doing. It is true enough, as he puts it, that "since the late 1930's [the courts] have assumed that civil rights and property rights can be sharply distinguished, and that civil rights . . . merit greater judicial protection than property rights." But more recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions have retreated somewhat from this unfortunate view.

In 1972, in *Lynch* v. *Household Finance Corporation*, the Court flatly rejected the argument that property rights are not protected by the Civil Rights Act. More recently, in *Dolan* v. *City of Tigard* (1994), Chief Justice Rehnquist wrote, "We see no reason why the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment [protecting private property from uncompensated takings], as much a part of the Bill of Rights as the First Amendment or the Fourth Amendment, should be relegated to the status of a poor relation." In several other cases decided in the past decade or so, the

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Court has extended the legal protection of private property by finding a variety of government regulations to amount to constitutionally forbidden uncompensated takings.

So much for the good news. The bad news is that though the Supreme Court has by and large rebuffed demands that "just compensation" under the Fifth Amendment be declared unavailable in cases of confiscatory regulation, it has also created a well-nigh impenetrable procedural obstacle course for aggrieved property owners to pass through before they are able to sue in federal courts. Under the current rules, property owners suing for violation of their constitutional rights must first go through a lengthy administrative process to achieve a "final" administrative decision, then apply for a zoning variance, then sue in state court. Only then—after being denied relief at every step through this litigational maze—may they bring their case to federal court.

Unfortunately, when they do, they are greeted with a true Catch-22. Several federal courts have taken the position that, having been unsuccessful in state court, the aggrieved owners are barred from suing in federal courts. The practical upshot has been that because of the cost and delay inherent in this Dickensian legal regime, only the most determined and wealthiest landowners (or those few ordinary folks whose plight attracts the pro-bono support of conservative public-interest law firms) are able to seek judicial relief for de-facto takings of their property. These costly and at times pointless procedural complications have effectively put the great majority of American landowners beyond the pale of constitutional protection.

GIDEON KANNER
Loyola Law School
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

In his provocative "Life, Liberty, Property," Richard Pipes reminds us how easily private-property rights—one of the cornerstones of our nation's political heritage—can be taken from us. Indeed, the "taking" of private property by the federal government—and without constitutionally guaranteed just compensation—has become a common occurrence in rural areas of the United States.

Regulators at the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and their environmentalist allies—the "guardians" about whom Tocqueville warned over 150 years ago—have succeeded in making the Endangered Species Act an instrument for national land-use policy. Landowners who happen to have threatened or endangered species on their property, or who have habitats that might be used by endangered species, are routinely prevented from deriving economic benefit from their land, whether by harvesting trees, planting crops, or building homes. Ironically, the better steward a landowner is, the more likely it is that he will be punished by losing the use of his property.

Similarly, federal wetlands regulations wreak havoc with landowners and with the Constitution. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency claim that Section 404 of the Clean Water Act gives them authority to regulate wetlands, even though the word "wetland" appears nowhere in that section of the law.

Behind every property owner who sees his livelihood destroyed or life savings depleted by regulations purporting to protect the environment lies a threat to liberty no less serious than many of the transgressions routinely committed by run-of-the-mill despots. It is to Mr. Pipes's credit that he has warned of the darker side of such self-appointed and self-anointed "guardians."

BONNER R. COHEN
Lexington Institute
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

Richard Pipes's "Life, Liberty, Property" is outstanding. It should be required reading for every elected official in the country, although, unfortunately, it would likely have little effect.

BARBARA HOFFMAN
New York City

RICHARD PIPES writes:

Before replying to these letters, let me note that my essay in COMMENTARY was taken from the concluding chapter of my new book, *Property and Freedom*, in which I address several of the issues raised by my correspondents. Thus, I discuss the case of *Dolan* v. *City of Tigard* mentioned by Gideon Kanner, and even cite the same words of Justice Rehnquist that he does. Similarly, I deal with the various regulations inhibiting the use of landed property mentioned by Bonner R. Cohen. I believe both writers will find my full text to be in agreement with their remarks.

J.W. Barchfield's principal objection to private property is one that goes back to remote antiquity, namely, that wealth causes poverty. There is no evidence for this proposition, although anthropological studies reveal that it is commonly believed by peasants in regions as far apart as Italy and Mexico, who are convinced that if their neighbor becomes richer than they are, it can only be at their expense. This is a myth, but one that makes inequality easier to bear. It is strange, however, to see it repeated under contemporary conditions when wealth increasingly assumes the form of intellectual property. After all, Bill Gates, one of the world's richest men, did not make his fortune by robbing the poor. If anything, he has made some of them richer.

In general, in countries that respect property rights, the poor fare much better than their counterparts in countries where these rights are violated. This is true for two reasons. The first is that capital, representing as it does deferred consumption, makes investment possible and thus creates employment opportunities. Secondly, property comprises not only physical objects but rights, which, in nations that respect property and the rule of law (the two are inseparable), are enjoyed by even the poorest members of society. As Churchill has put it: "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries."

In response to Dan Kacsir, let me paraphrase what I have said above: the pursuit of property by some does not inhibit others from "pursuing their own brand of happiness." I disagree

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that we live in a world of limited resources: human ingenuity, assisted by science, knows no limits in expanding the material basis of life. There are no facts to support Mr. Kacsir's claim that the "gap in wealth between those at the top of American society and those at the bottom is at an all-time high and widening at an alarming rate." The fact that Bill Gates counts his fortune in the tens of billions in no way affects the condition of the average employed American whose living standards are steadily rising.

I appreciate Barbara Hoffman's enthusiastic endorsement of my views.

Pinochet

TO THE EDITOR:

In "Justice for Pinochet?" [March], Elliott Abrams claims that the extradition of General Pinochet from Great Britain to Spain depends on extraterritoriality—that is, on trying Pinochet for crimes committed outside of Spain's jurisdiction. But the Spanish order of extradition charges Pinochet with crimes against Spanish citizens in Chile. This is no different from American law, which seeks to punish those who do harm to American citizens outside the territory of the United States.

Mr. Abrams also argues that the issues in this case were resolved by the people of Chile through various plebiscites and elections, and that their decisions should not be burdened by interference from outside their borders. But this is akin to saying that we should have allowed Germany to resolve the issues surrounding the Hitler regime by means of its own internal votes.

Mr. Abrams should have relied on diplomatic immunity as the most forceful argument against Pinochet's extradition. Pinochet entered Great Britain on a diplomatic passport. Great Britain was not obligated to admit him on these terms, and could have insisted on his admission under a general passport. Once admitted, however, Pinochet, like all other diplomats, was entitled to the immunities which that passport provides.

JAY M. ZERIN
Pomona, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

If all of General Pinochet's victims had been Chilean, Elliott Abrams might be right in his claim that the decision to prosecute rests entirely with the Chilean people. But the Spanish judge (to the best of my knowledge) was acting on a petition from Spanish citizens based on actions committed against a Spaniard. Thus the judge is following the course allowed for by Mr. Abrams in his own discussion of General Pinochet's possible involvement with the murder of Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C.

As for the other abusers of human rights Mr. Abrams mentions, Fidel Castro and Yasir Arafat, it is not clear whether, in the case of Castro, he includes atrocities committed strictly in Cuba or those in Angola and elsewhere. Even if Angola is included, the political situation there is sufficiently unstable that Angolans have much more to worry about than the role played by Castro. And though Yasir Arafat's minions have certainly killed innocents of numerous nationalities, I suspect that many nations might have arrested him but for fear of what gruesome atrocities might be committed against them in retaliation.

As Mr. Abrams says, binding up a nation's wounds does involve dynamics far beyond the rules of a single courtroom. But the case of General Pinochet involves binding up multinational wounds. The trials of Nuremberg, Tokyo, and the Hague, flawed though they may be, provide the precedent for helping citizens of many countries come to terms with all the atrocities allegedly committed at his command.

DORON BECKER
Silver Spring, Maryland

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A Bizarre Concept. The concept to bring "sacrifices for peace" is a new one that has never before found application in world history. It was created by Arab propaganda to induce Israel to agree to its dismemberment, to give strategic assets to those who are determined to destroy it.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been subjected to almost constant Arab terror, to unceasing Arab aggression, and to three major wars. In the Six-Day War, it recovered its heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; it captured the Golan Heights from Syria, which had been used for decades to shell and spread terror over much of northern Israel; and it conquered Gaza and the Sinai Desert that had been used by Egypt as staging ground and invasion route to Israel.

Many Sacrifices for Peace. In order to achieve peace with its neighbors, Israel brought sacrifices for peace that have no precedent in the history of the world. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned the entire Sinai. There is little thanks on the part of Egypt for this generosity and this sacrifice for peace. The controlled Egyptian press spews daily anti-Israel venom. President Mubarak has never visited Jerusalem. It is the coolest possible peace. A sacrifice for peace brought in vain—probably a major act of folly on the part of Israel.

Israel made sacrifices for peace by signing a peace treaty with Jordan. In that peace, Israel granted Jordan a large yearly allowance of fresh water from its own dwindling and meager resources and accepted a petty demand for "border rectification"—yielding of land. As for Syria, no offered sacrifice for peace seems to be sufficient to satisfy its dictator, President Hafez Assad. He is unwilling to consider even an ice-cold peace, except for Israel's total surrender of the Golan Heights. Fortunately, under the current Israeli government such a surrender is not in the cards.

The greatest sacrifice for peace that Israel has brought was the resuscitation of the bankrupt and moribund PLO terror organization and the acceptance of it "chairman" Yasser Arafat as a negotiating partner. In this ill-advised process, foisted on Israel by world pressure and by its previous government, Israel has made far-reaching and existential sacrifices and concessions. It has yielded control of the Gaza Strip and of all major "West Bank" cities to the Palestinian Authority and has agreed to detailed plans to grant further autonomy to the Palestinians. In what is probably the ultimate folly in this process, Israel has tolerated the formation of a Palestinian "police force" (actually an army) of 40,000 men—the largest police-to-population ratio in the world (!) — and has equipped this "police force' with a complete arsenal of automatic weapons. As the world now knows, these weapons were turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians at the very first opportunity that the Palestinian leaders provoked.

Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police".

The Arab countries, not Israel, are killing peace in the Middle East. The PLO, apart from the bloody crimes that it has committed against Israel, has now established a virtual dictatorship in the territory allotted to it. In Egypt, thousands of Copts have been killed and their churches burned. President Assad of Syria has occupied Lebanon and has killed and tortured thousands. Iraq, under its dictator Saddam Hussein, is a rogue state attacking its neighbors and killing its own citizens. Saudi Arabia is a monarchical tyranny. Sudan is engaged in the systematic slaughter and enslavement of its black African people. How strange that nobody asks the Palestinians or any of the Arab states to bring any sacrifices for peace. Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police." Billy clubs are good enough for London Bobbies. Why should any more be needed to patrol Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem?

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TO THE EDITOR:

On April 15, the British Home Secretary Jack Straw ruled for the second time that the Spanish extradition request for General Augusto Pinochet should proceed, thus rejecting arguments by lawyers for General Pinochet and the government of Chile as well as by Elliott Abrams. In particular, Straw dismissed suggestions that, on the facts before him, Chile's sovereignty or its democratic transition should trump Britain's obligation to extradite Pinochet for crimes pursuant to the United Nations Convention on Torture.

Mr. Abrams seems to ignore the fact that Pinochet directly organized the murder, disappearance, and torture of thousands of individuals. (Mr. Abrams uses the passive voice to note that the Pinochet years of supposed economic boom were also "marked by gross human-rights violations ranging from press censorship to torture and murder of the regime's opponents," as if these horrors were visited on Chile from above.) He similarly ignores the fact that international law authorizes, and in the case of the Torture Convention requires, the extraterritorial prosecution of such crimes. The point of these laws, like all penal laws, is to deter crime. No enforcement, no deterrence.

But Mr. Abrams relies on his experience "negotiat[ing] with several dictators concerning their departure from power" to argue that these despots might have clung to office had they been worried about prosecution. Presumably, he is talking about the likes of Haiti's "Baby Doc" Duvalier and the military leaders

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of Guatemala and Argentina, all of whom were backed by the Reagan administration even as they committed atrocities against their own people. Perhaps if the United States had not been so indulgent—indeed, if it had threatened prosecution from the outset—these tyrants would not have been emboldened to commit such outrages in the first place. In any event, they all left when their support dried up, not because of promises of amnesty.

Mr. Abrams misrepresents the Chilean domestic situation. Pinochet's self-amnesty was not "agreed upon" with the "incoming democrats." It was imposed by the military twelve years before they left power. The elected democrats promised to annul it but could not. Polls consistently show that a large majority of Chileans and virtually all of Pinochet's victims want to see General Pinochet tried for his crimes, something that is not possible in Chile.

Finally, Mr. Abrams's principal warning of the "real dangers in proclaiming that any judge, anywhere, may try any former official" ignores not only the mandate of international law, but the role of the political branches of the Spanish and British governments. Jack Straw, after weighing the legal and political factors, twice made the difficult decision to authorize Spain's extradition bid for Pinochet. Had Chileans been united in support of Pinochet's immunity, as Mr. Abrams claims, the Home Secretary presumably would have decided differently.

The debate on Pinochet's arrest offers an opportunity to acknowledge the evidence on Pinochet's involvement in crimes against humanity, to remember his victims, to re-examine U.S. government support for Pinochet's coup and its complicity in his abuses, and to seek the release of information still being withheld by Washington that could illuminate these questions. Sadly, Mr. Abrams is virtually silent on these matters.

REED BRODY
SANDEEP PURI
Human Rights Watch
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

As an addendum to Elliott Abrams's excellent article on the Pinochet case, it is helpful to know something of the conditions that brought about the overthrow of the Allende government. I spent a great deal of time in Chile in 1972 and 1973, negotiating with officials of the Allende regime over compensation for an expropriated copper mine. I was there during the 1973 coup and for a great deal of time thereafter.

In my judgment, things had gotten so bad by 1973 that a coup was inevitable. The only question was whether it would come from the Right—i.e., the armed forces—or from the extreme Left, which was militant, heavily armed, and influenced if not dominated by Castro (I call it the "extreme" Left to distinguish it from the Allende regime, which was itself Marxist).

Just how bad were things? The country had ceased to function. Food was scarce on all sides, from the best hotels to the homes of the poor. Farmers feared that their land was about to be expropriated, so they did not invest, and food production plummeted. In all of 1972-73, I saw meat once, at an official government lunch. Housewives rose before dawn to get into line in hopes of buying a loaf of bread.

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mainstay of the economy, fell drastically. Travel between cities virtually ceased, since the extreme Left had scattered tire-cutting devices on the highways. Pipelines were blown up, and gasoline was so scarce that when a gas station had some, customers had to push one another's cars to move the line forward. Inflation was out of control, on the order of 700 percent or more in 1973; people carried currency around in large envelopes or boxes.

In downtown Santiago there was constant turmoil and strife. Teenagers wearing helmets marched around carrying clubs and chanting opposition slogans. The smell of tear gas was often in the air, and fires were set on street corners with burning tires. The sound of automatic weapons was sometimes heard.

Anyone with experience in Latin America knew that this untenable situation was about to blow up. In the event, a Castro-type regime did not take power, and a military government did. There followed a protracted, clandestine civil war between the military and the disappointed and outraged Left.

In a 1980 plebiscite, Pinochet won with a large majority, which gave him eight more years in office. The people apparently chose stability. In accordance with the plebiscite, Pinochet conducted elections in 1988, and stepped down when he lost. Meanwhile, out of the ashes of the Allende years, he had established a prosperous Chile that became a model for the economies of developing nations.

Surely innocent people died or were harmed in the violence of 1973 and the warfare that followed. Surely there was much cruelty. But if there had been a Castro-type regime or an open civil war, the carnage would have been greater.

PHILIP C. WALSH
Peapack, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Elliott Abrams might have pointed out that General Pinochet was detained in Britain under European human-rights law. Unfortunately, human-rights law is not really the issue. If it were, then of course (as Mr. Abrams suggests) Fidel Castro, receiving an honorary degree in Spain when all this began, would have been arrested too. It is worth noting that those who are howling for General Pinochet's blood, especially his victims, were and are happy to applaud and support Castro at his vicious worst.

To preserve even a minimal sense of decency one must ask: why immunity for Castro (and, indeed, the Left in general) in the sanctimonious campaign of those who bellow against Pinochet? The answer lies in the record of the revolutionary Left in Latin America, and of the *bien-pensant* support for it in Europe and the U.S. That record is, without exception, a story of hideous, bloody, embarrassing failure, an outrage to common humanity, let alone "rights." Cuban-backed uprisings in Central and South America failed. Nicaraguan Marxist-Leninists, after slaughtering the Miskito Indians and imprisoning, torturing, and murdering their other opponents (all with direct help from Castro), supposed that they had their country wrapped up, and found they did not.

Of course, there is the "success" of Castro. He has ruined Cuba's economy, and his human-rights record recalls the darker pages of Asian despotism. But he is still in power, thumbing his nose at the United States. Against all the odds, this ragged, nasty *caudillo* is still able to strut the political stage, lionized, stroked, smiled at, and cuddled by Europe's vicarious revolutionaries.

Underneath this hero-worship, of course, there burns a deep resentment over the debacles of the Latin American Left. And Pinochet did something which rouses that resentment to white heat. His draconian rule was a spectacular success, healing the economy and restoring a base for democracy in the body politic that Allende had destroyed. The process was painful, often brutal, but it worked well and ended well—in marked contrast to the "socialist" pain and brutality that were and, in the case of Cuba, still are nostalgically excused and applauded by the very people who are screaming for Pinochet's head.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

ELLIOTT ABRAMS writes:

In the lead opinion in the Pinochet case, Lord Browne-Wilkinson candidly states that "it may well be thought that the trial of Senator Pinochet in Spain for offens-

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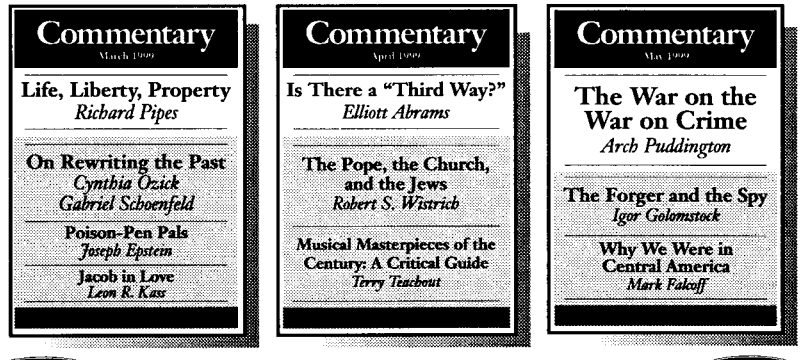

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es all of which related to the state of Chile and most of which occurred in Chile is not calculated to achieve the best justice. But I cannot emphasize too strongly that that is no concern of your Lordships." This is a key point: the Law Lords were concerned with construing the law, not matters such as stability, democracy, or even justice. But if the Law Lords could not consider these matters, my view was (and is) that statesmen must. For example, South Africa's Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, recently called for a new round of amnesties for apartheid-era human-rights violations, stating that endless trials would produce political divisiveness and violence that would threaten his country's future.

Still, Jay M. Zerin and Doron Becker are right in suggesting that cases must sometimes be tried by foreign governments. The question is when. Mr. Becker is wrong in suggesting an analogy between the Letelier case and the Spanish cases being brought in London: in Letelier, the crime was actually committed in the United States, while the cases being raised in London involve acts committed in Chile—not in Spain. Mr. Zerin is correct in saying that the United States, Spain, and many other countries prosecute crimes against their citizens committed outside their territory, but here again the issue is when that effort is wise and when it is not.

Nuremberg is an easy case, but is it really a precedent for trying Pinochet? The analogies between Pinochet and Hitler, and between Germany in 1945 and Chile today, appeal to both Mr. Zerin and Mr. Becker, but not to me. "Helping citizens of many countries come to terms" with human-rights abuses (per Mr. Becker) is too vague a goal for me to accept, and may come at too high a price. And Mr. Zerin is wrong about Pinochet's passport. Mere possession of a diplomatic passport does not automatically bring the bearer diplomatic immunity, which is only accorded to accredited persons on diplomatic missions. It can be argued that as Pinochet was an official guest of the British Ministry of Defense, this was tantamount to accreditation. The British courts saw it otherwise.

I am grateful to Philip C. Walsh for his account of the situation in Chile in 1973. Coups in Latin America often have very broad popular support, which is one reason they succeed. (Attempts in the 1980's against Argentina's president Raúl Alfonsín and Venezuela's president Carlos Andrés Pérez failed for lack of wide backing.) But Mr. Walsh goes too far, I think, in complimenting Pinochet for his achievements, for some of these were squeezed out of him under great pressure, and in any event his human-rights violations were indefensible.

Herb Greer is absolutely right in suggesting that the Pinochet case tells us more about leftist politics than about true commitments to human rights. One of those "howling for General Pinochet's blood" but who was "happy to applaud and support Castro" and other leftists is Reed Brody, whose mendacious letter I have left for last. Mr. Brody (whose co-author, Sandeep Puri, I do not know) is famous in some human-rights circles as the author of the 1985 "Brody Report" on allegations of human-rights abuses by the *contras* in Nicaragua. He posed as an honest and balanced analyst, but it later emerged that during his three-month stay in Managua his hotel bill was picked up by the Sandinista regime, which also provided him with cars and office space. Somehow Mr. Brody never got around to reporting on Communist human-rights abuses.

His letter is a museum piece of leftist agitprop. All Latin dictators, he says, were backed by the Reagan administration; the fact that the Reagan administration removed "Baby Doc" Duvalier goes unmentioned, as does the relentless pressure for human-rights improvements in Pinochet's Chile. Mr. Brody's explanation for human-rights problems in the region is that rulers were "emboldened to commit such outrages in the first place" because the United States was "so indulgent." This kind of simple-mindedness cannot explain why there was democracy in Costa Rica and Venezuela but dictatorship in Argentina and Haiti, for it denies the existence of Latin American political culture altogether. What is bad, according to Mr. Brody, must have come from Washington. His misreading of the Chilean political situation and the Pinochet case itself would take too much space to refute in detail. Fortunately his knee-jerk anti-Americanism, which during the cold war characterized all too much of the human-rights movement, is now a personal idiosyncrasy rather than a significant problem.

Correction

In Igor Golomstock's article, "The Forger and the Spy," which appeared last month, the names of the art historian Marc Fumaroli and of John Costello, the author of *The Mask of Treachery*, were misspelled. We regret the errors. —ED.

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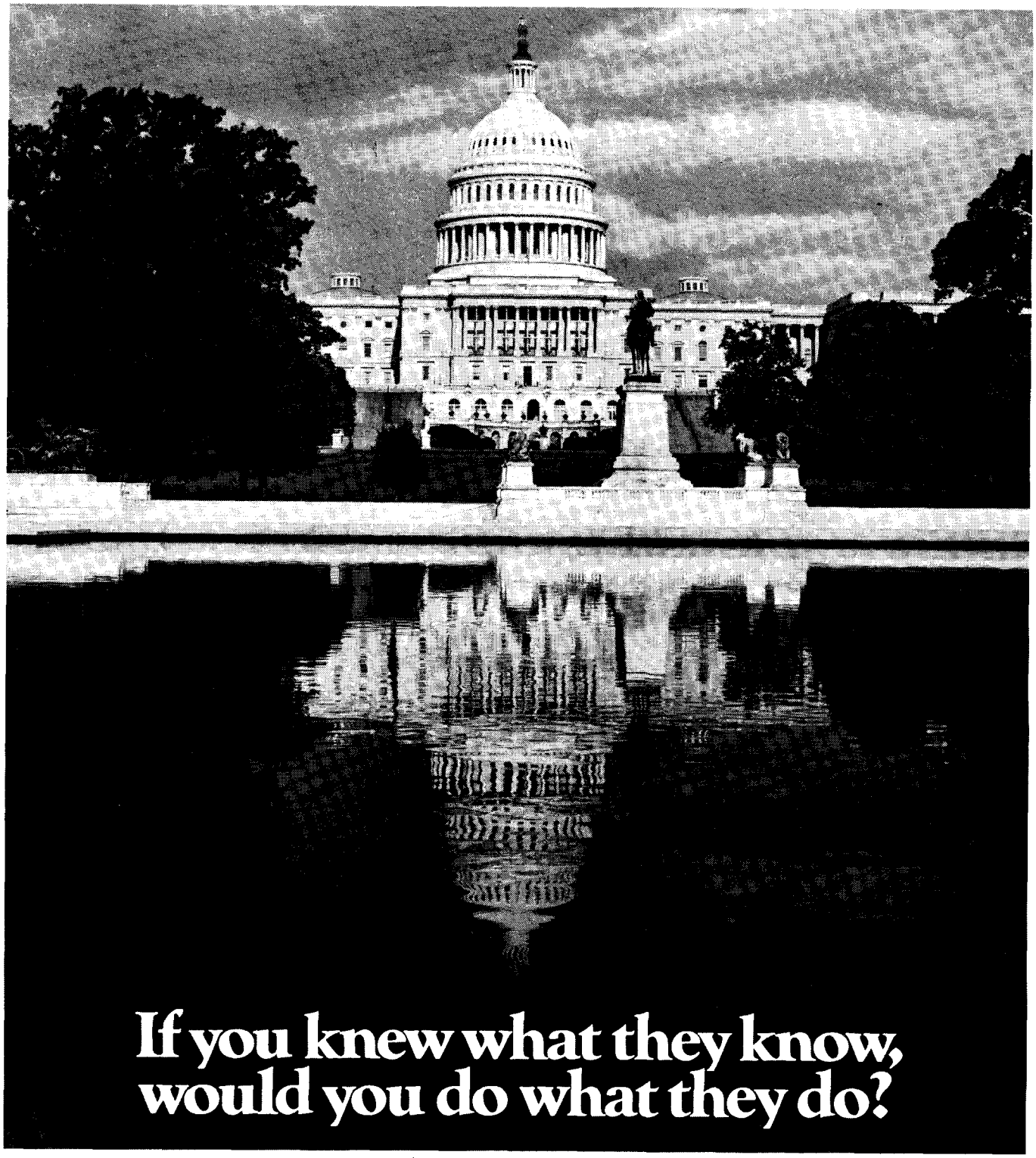

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Commentary
June 1999

The Road to Kosovo

Joshua Muravchik

AROUND THE beginning of April, the United States discovered that it was at war.

On March 24, President Clinton announced that American and other NATO forces had commenced air strikes on Serbia, whose ruler, Slobodan Milosevic, had refused to sign an agreement providing autonomy for the province of Kosovo. For Clinton, air strikes were a familiar tool: he had ordered them on previous occasions—against Iraq, against the Bosnian Serbs, against the terrorist Osama Bin Laden—and had threatened them many other times. But in each instance, the attacks or threatened attacks were designed to punish some outrage or undergird what Secretary of State Madeleine Albright liked to call "diplomacy backed by force," and usually they were brief and inconclusive. Never before, even in the twelve-day bombardment of the Bosnian Serbs in 1995 that helped to bring about the Dayton accords, had they seemed to amount to war.

Now, in contrast to those earlier episodes, Milosevic's response made it impossible for Clinton to cease firing and claim he had achieved his objectives. Not only did the Serbian ruler reiterate his refusal to bow to American terms, but his forces launched an all-out campaign to annihilate the guerrilla Kosovo Liberation Army and to drive the bulk of Kosovo's Albanian population out of the territory. His defiance was underscored by the capture of three American servicemen by Serbian soldiers somewhere along the Macedonian border. Although the State Department carefully avoided describing the three as prisoners of *war* (even while demanding that Serbia respect the Geneva convention governing the treatment of such prisoners), with the Yugoslav army on the attack all over Kosovo, and NATO trying to stop it by means of an intensifying bombardment, it was hard to escape the fact that this time America *was* at war.

And it was losing. In announcing the attack, Clinton had focused on two goals: "to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive" and "to prevent a wider war" that could "involve and destabilize neighboring nations." Early into the campaign, it became obvious that NATO was achieving neither objective, and indeed that its actions were counterproductive. The scope and brutality of Serbian attacks on Kosovo civilians increased manyfold, and fighting spilled over into Albania. Serb forces occupied a disputed piece of Croatia; Kosovar refugees flooded Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro; and the economies of the nearby fledgling democracies were damaged by the disruption of commerce.

Similarly unmet were two other goals articulated by the President: to "seriously damage the Ser-

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bian military's capacity to harm the people of Kosovo" and to "demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's purpose." The first was quickly shown to be moot: Serbia's military capacity may have been diminished, but it was sufficient to drive all of the Kosovars from their homes and to murder, maim, rape, and despoil as many of them along the way as the Serbs wished. The second was undermined by Clinton's own repeated assertion that he did not "intend to put our troops" in Kosovo (except with Serbian consent). Administration officials tried to compensate by insisting that the air war alone would do the trick, by destroying things "near and dear" to Milosevic. But when these touted pressure points turned out to be targets like a tobacco warehouse in which Milosevic's son had a financial interest, NATO's strategy was revealed as little more than a hope and a prayer.

Nor did these attacks accomplish any notable progress toward the one key aim that NATO leaders were reluctant to articulate—namely, weakening Milosevic's hold on power. On the contrary, 27 leading Serbian dissidents, self-described "activists for a democratic and anti-nationalist Serbia," issued a statement decrying the fact that "the existing regime has only been reinforced by NATO's attacks by way of the natural reaction of people to rally around the flag in times of foreign aggression. . . . The democratic forces in Serbia have been weakened."

To make matters still worse, after the initial round of NATO attacks, it was revealed that U.S. forces had almost exhausted their supply of air-launched cruise missiles. These had been the weapon of choice for Clinton's various strikes in the past, for the reason that they can accurately deliver a relatively large explosion from a distance that will keep a pilot safe from ground fire. No production line currently exists to replace the cruise missiles; a new, follow-on weapon is now being rushed toward initial service in 2002. If, in the meantime, America should face combat in, say, Iraq or Korea, U.S. strategists will have to do without, and U.S. pilots may pay with their lives for the shortage.

Finally, even though Kosovo is little more than a flyspeck on the map, the war that NATO was losing turned out to have surprisingly high stakes. The war was begun for humanitarian reasons; but because it constituted the first time NATO was being tested in combat, it soon took on a strategic significance. In justifying his decision, Clinton said that failure to strike Serbia "would discredit NATO." If so, how much more would NATO be discredited if it should end up being defeated by Serbia? Since the close of the cold war, the alliance has been haunted by doubts about its enduring purpose. If the war is lost, these will return with a vengeance. Indeed, administration officials themselves acknowledged to the *Washington Post* that "the result could be the emasculation of NATO and a belittlement of American standing in Europe." And since NATO is everywhere understood to be America's number-one foreign commitment, any such result is bound to damage our standing in other regions as well.

How did we come to find ourselves with so much to lose in a conflict so remote that we stumbled into it without clear intent? The war in Kosovo did not descend upon us as a quirk of fate. Although it may have caught us by surprise, our current predicament is the logical outcome of a trail of our own policy choices, made over the course of a decade. To understand it, which is the prerequisite for working our way out of it, we must first retrace our steps—steps that will take us to regions of the world other than Yugoslavia, and especially to Iraq.

THE CRUMBLING of Yugoslavia first became visible during the administration of George Bush, just a few months after the completion of Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Although President Bush was then boasting that in Iraq we had "kicked the Vietnam syndrome"—a metaphor for the stark aversion to employing force—some aspects of our Persian Gulf intervention gave reason to doubt this.

For one thing, in order to win (by a narrow margin) the Senate's approval of military action against Iraq, Bush had first had to procure a UN Security Council resolution setting a deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Then-Governor Bill Clinton exemplified the attitudes, especially among Democrats, at which this tactic was aimed. Asked at the time how he would have voted had he been a Senator, Clinton responded that he agreed with those who argued for giving sanctions more time rather than going to war. But, he added warily, "I guess I would have voted with the majority if it was a close vote" because "it would [not] have been a good thing for Congress to go on record . . . watering down and weakening the full impact of the UN resolution."

In addition to this still-widespread reluctance to countenance military action on the basis of American interests alone, some decisions taken during the war itself likewise suggested that our recovery from the Vietnam syndrome was only partial. Force was employed, but risks were reduced to an absolute minimum: before attacking Iraq, Wash-

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ington deployed to the Gulf a huge share of its military assets. And once we attacked, we halted the campaign as hastily as possible, leaving in place a tyrant whom Bush had likened to Hitler.

The result of the first decision was that while America felt exultant about its victory, it was also left feeling drained by the effort. This was one reason Washington was eager to accept suggestions by European leaders at the time that they would take the lead in handling Yugoslavia. The result of the second decision was that Saddam Hussein soon resumed his mischief. And the result of both was that, from then until now, the twin challenges of Yugoslavia and Iraq have reverberated against each other, taxing Washington's capacity to manage a global foreign policy.

By the end of 1991, European efforts to pacify Yugoslavia had failed. Serbian forces attacked Slovenia and then Croatia as each of these republics claimed independence. Washington's reaction was summed up famously by Secretary of State James Baker: "We have no dog in that fight." And the conflict grew far more savage in the spring of 1992, when it spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina and the world first heard the term "ethnic cleansing." But still the U.S. kept its distance, President Bush referring to the Bosnian mayhem as a "hiccup."

Then, in its last days in office, the Bush administration slammed the barn door shut after the horses had fled. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger sent Milosevic a note warning that "in the event of a conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the U.S. will be prepared to employ military force against Serbians in Kosovo and Serbia proper." Not only was the timing strange—Eagleburger spoke for an administration that in a few weeks would no longer exist—but the focus seemed off as well.

True, Kosovo was a seething cauldron where Milosevic had first hoisted the banner of virulent nationalism. But it was universally recognized as a part of Serbia. Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, had declared its independence, been granted diplomatic recognition by Washington and many other governments, and been admitted to the United Nations. Serbian-supported attacks on Bosnia were therefore tantamount to international aggression, flouting the very same principles Bush had invoked against Iraq. Why ignore flagrant Serb violations of international law in Bosnia and then threaten Serbia militarily over Kosovo (a threat that itself violated international law)?

These questions were in the air during the 1992 presidential campaign, when Bush's abdication on Bosnia became a target for candidate Bill Clinton. "It is time for real leadership to stop the continuing tragedy in the former Yugoslav republics," Clinton said then, adding, on another occasion, "The United States and the international community must take action. If the horrors of the Holocaust taught us anything, it is the high cost of remaining silent and paralyzed in the face of genocide."

But once Clinton took office, he put these thoughts behind him. Although he has lately revised the history of his early presidency to make it seem otherwise, domestic issues were his overwhelming and practically his only priority. As for Bosnia, Secretary of State Warren Christopher called it "a humanitarian crisis a long way from home, in the middle of another continent," stressing that "it does not involve our vital interests," and Clinton himself said at the time: "I don't want to have to spend any more time on that than is absolutely necessary, because what I got elected to do was to let America look at our own problems."

In order to do that, Clinton appealed to the United Nations to play a more central role in managing international relations. After all, had not the world body proved its worth in the Persian Gulf crisis? "UN peacekeeping holds the promise to resolve many of this era's conflicts," declared the new President, while "we've simply got to focus on rebuilding America."

The President's "focus on rebuilding America" began with an attack on the federal budget deficit. This initially discomfited some of his fellow Democrats; after all, cutting and balancing the budget was traditionally a Republican objective. But when the numbers were parsed, Clinton's approach set them at ease. Domestic spending was reduced not a cent. Instead, the entire Clinton cut was to come out of international programs, and the lion's share of it from defense.

These sharp reductions were masked behind something called the "bottom-up review," announced as an exercise to determine American defense needs from scratch. Although based on the supposition that we should be able to fight two regional wars simultaneously, the resultant budget involved a sleight of hand—in fact, two. First, our forces were proportioned to the less demanding requirement of fighting two wars in close sequence rather than at the same time. And second, even this easier standard was not fully funded: estimates of the shortfall ranged from the Congressional Budget Office's $53-$100 billion (over five years) to

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the General Accounting Office's $150 billion. One of the many development programs terminated by these economies was the tri-service standoff attack missile, a new weapon intended as a successor to the cruise missiles currently in the Pentagon's inventory but no longer being produced.

With the nation at peace, military shortages carried little price. The budget deficit fell, the economy prospered, and the President reaped a bonanza of public approval. His reliance on the United Nations, however, did not work out so well.

When Clinton took office, there was still a substantial U.S. military contingent in Somalia; it had been dispatched there by President Bush to rescue the victims of famine and then kept there, at the urging of UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to help toward the more ambitious goal of repairing the country's political cohesion. Given his own strong orientation toward the UN, Clinton acquiesced in Boutros-Ghali's plan, agreeing to leave a contingent of several thousand U.S. troops in Somalia.

This decision proved fateful when, in October 1993, a company of U.S. army rangers was decimated in a firefight with Somali gangs in the alleyways of Mogadishu. Americans were shocked by news photos of the corpses of soldiers being desecrated by gleeful mobs of the very people the GI's had gone to rescue. Clinton ordered a rapid withdrawal.

The President's political embarrassment over Somalia had tragic repercussions six months later when violence seized Rwanda and some half-million or more Tutsis were murdered by Hutus over the span of a few months in the first case of true genocide (to use a term often invoked loosely) since Hitler. When he visited Rwanda last year, Clinton acknowledged that "the international community must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy [because] we did not act quickly enough. . . . We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name." But this apparent apology was really an exercise in self-exoneration, for the person who blocked international action was Clinton himself, and it was also he who ordered that the word "genocide" not be uttered lest it build pressure on him to respond. The only plan America would agree to was to send aid to refugees after the fighting and killing had ended.

THE COLD shoulder he turned toward the dying Tutsis epitomized the indifference to foreign affairs that characterized Clinton's first two-and-a-half years in office. But then, in the middle of 1995, in the case of Bosnia, the President shifted to a more active approach. He recalled it this way in a recent speech:

> When President Milosevic started the war in Bosnia seven years ago, the world did not act quickly enough to stop him. . . . A quarter of a million people . . . were killed. . . . This was a genocide in the heart of Europe. It did not happen in 1945; it was going on in 1995. Now, at the time, a lot of people said, well, there's nothing you can do about it, Mr. President. . . . [But] I just don't believe that. . . . . [So] the United States and our allies, along with the courageous people in Bosnia and in Croatia . . . found the unity and the will to stand up against the aggression, and we helped to end the war.

Here again we have a blatant case of bowdlerized history. This genocide, if that is what it was (the Serbs' bloody campaign was intended not to annihilate all the Muslims but to drive them away and seize their land), had been going on not only in 1995 but also in 1994 and 1993. Only the first nine or ten months of the war in Bosnia occurred on Bush's "watch." If 250,000 people died, most did so after Clinton became President. Contrary to the studied implication that it was he who overruled the nay-sayers, Clinton withstood appeals to halt the Bosnia carnage for as long as he possibly could.

What finally compelled him to reverse course was a combination of pressures. First, Jacques Chirac replaced François Mitterrand as president of France and called for tougher action against Serbia. Second, Congress passed a resolution providing arms to the Bosnian government in contravention of a UN-imposed embargo. (Although Clinton vetoed the bill, it had passed both houses by a two-thirds majority, so an override seemed to be in the cards.) And finally, the 1996 election loomed on the horizon. In the *Washington Post*, it was reported that "Clinton's newest political guru, consultant Dick Morris, had suggested in mid-level meetings that, as one [official] put it, 'you guys ought to take care of Bosnia before 1996 so it does not screw us up.'"

With this as an impetus, Clinton secured NATO's agreement to twelve days of bombing, which may have helped to soften the Serbs, although the stunning success of Croatian ground forces in recapturing Serb-held territory in the region called the Krajina probably had a bigger impact. But the real key to the Dayton accords that ended the fighting was Clinton's willingness both to accept a de-facto partition of Bosnia—the essential goal of the Serbian aggression—and to treat

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Milosevic as the key peacemaker. Not only did this earn Milosevic an implicit (and perhaps explicit) exemption from prosecution for war crimes, despite the fact that he was the mastermind behind most of the violence, but it strengthened his position in other ways as well. So jury-rigged was the Bosnia created by Dayton that years of delicate implementation would be required, thus placing a continued high premium on securing Milosevic's cooperation.

The implications for Kosovo should have been clear. Although virtually all Serbs felt an attachment to this cradle of national identity, Milosevic had put his own distinctive stamp on the Kosovo cause. He had justified his seizure of power from his mentor, Ivan Stambolic, in 1987 with the claim that Stambolic had been insufficiently vigilant over Serb interests in Kosovo. On this issue above all others, Milosevic marked himself out as a militant.

At the same time, Dayton also contributed to the radicalization of Kosovo's Albanians. Since Milosevic's ascent, they had suffered relentless persecution, aimed, it seemed, at encouraging their emigration. For years, under the leadership of their chosen president, Ibrahim Rugova, they had pressed their claim to independence nonviolently. Now, in the eyes of many young Albanians, Dayton had completed the process by which each and every one of the former Yugoslavia's various subgroups would achieve its national aspirations—except themselves. An increasing number rejected Rugova's Gandhian approach and rallied to the radical guerrilla force called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which made its presence felt early in 1996 with several small armed attacks on Serb officials.

In sum, as far as Kosovo was concerned, Dayton hardened an already intractable conflict.

There remained one other international issue that threatened to roil the waters of Clinton's 1996 election campaign. In August, Saddam Hussein sent his military northward to reestablish sovereignty over Iraqi Kurdistan, a region that had enjoyed a kind of de-facto autonomy under the umbrella of Western military protection. Most Iraqis seemed to believe that America would defend this territory, on which thousands of members of U.S.-sponsored opposition groups operated under the guidance of the CIA. But instead of bombing Saddam's attacking tanks, Washington chose to strike at some Iraqi anti-aircraft positions far from the scene of battle and to announce an extension of the "no-fly zone" over southern Iraq. In short, the administration avoided a potentially messy confrontation with Saddam's forces while shielding itself from the charge that it had altogether failed to take action.

Although this succeeded in keeping the Iraq issue out of the electoral debate, Clinton's thinly disguised capitulation inflamed Saddam with the hope of new victories, and he soon initiated a string of challenges to the regime of sanctions and inspections designed to deprive him of all weapons of mass destruction. His mounting defiance culminated in the expulsion of American arms inspectors in January 1998. Punitive U.S. air strikes were averted by the last-minute mediation of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, but Saddam predictably refused to honor his agreement with Annan, curtailing cooperation with UN inspectors in August and ending it entirely in November. After aborting one bombing mission, Clinton finally launched Operation Desert Fox in December.

In explaining his threat of air strikes, Clinton had said that if Saddam were allowed to keep his arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, "some day, some way, I guarantee you, he'll use the arsenal." But the President brought Desert Fox to an end after a mere four days, and did not even bother to advance the claim that he had destroyed Saddam's arsenal, thus in effect conceding the end of the UN weapons-inspection regime. Although it was said that the attacks had degraded Iraq's military machine, they had done the same to ours as well, for in those four days the U.S. Air Force (in a harbinger of things to come) exhausted much of its remaining store of air-launched cruise missiles.

Saddam's success in riding out Clinton's punishment could not have been lost on Milosevic. Both men had been playing a similar game of defying Western demands, backing down under threat of attack, and then quickly welching on their promises. More: although Saddam posed as the spear-carrier of Islam, while the Serbs postured as Christendom's rampart against the infidel Turk, the two strongmen had forged an alliance based on a shared enemy, the United States. Reportedly, Iraqi cash and oil were to be exchanged for Serbian anti-aircraft missiles. No doubt they also compared notes on tactics for dealing with Washington.

In February 1998, just as Saddam was intensifying his confrontation with the weapons inspectors, Serbian military and police forces launched their largest campaign against KLA guerrillas in Kosovo. Villages were destroyed, civilians murdered. These hostilities continued throughout the spring and summer, leading to an October agreement

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brokered by Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton accords, under the threat of NATO air strikes.

The alliance's European members, it should be noted, had been reluctant to issue such threats. But they had been humiliated by their weak performance during the Bosnia crisis, and did not want to be seen once again as weak sisters. Washington and its major European allies also found themselves jockeying for influence within the newly reconfigured NATO, and the competition may have helped to stiffen all the partners. American leaders no doubt assured their allied counterparts, as they were later to express in public, that the mere threat of force, or at most a very small dose, would secure their aims.

In the event, Milosevic took a page from Saddam's book. He at once violated the October agreement, then agreed to negotiations this past winter at Rambouillet in France. But he clung steadfastly to what was dear to him. He would no more yield up Kosovo than Saddam would yield his weapons of mass destruction. Its bluff called, in late March NATO began to bomb.

Initially the attack, very much like those on Iraq, showed a certain circularity. NATO targeted anti-aircraft facilities—in other words, the alliance bombed little more than that which might inhibit its ability to bomb. Had Milosevic responded passively, we and our allies might well have ceased after a few days, declaring that we had taught him a lesson and appealing for renewed negotiations. But when, instead, he launched a massive assault against those in whose name we bombed, we found ourselves at war.

SECRETARY OF STATE Albright has called Kosovo "simply the most important thing we have done in the world." If that is so, it is only because we failed to do more important things. In Rwanda, the dimensions of the humanitarian catastrophe were vaster. In Iraq, the peril to our security was and is greater. In Bosnia, both the humanitarian and the security issues were larger. Yet to each of these challenges, we responded belatedly and with half-measures or less, with the result that Iraq's weapons programs have been unchained, Bosnia is essentially partitioned, and the Rwandan carnage continues to reverberate in the Congo.

Time and again, we have made threats that we have not even begun to carry out, or used force in small, symbolic gestures. Albright summarized this approach in the course of one of our many feckless confrontations with Iraq: "We are talking about using military force, but we are not talking about a war." If using force is not tantamount to war, we have now discovered in Kosovo that it can get you into a war. It got us into this one because our adversaries were emboldened by the demonstrated hollowness of our threats; because we ourselves felt our credibility slipping away; and perhaps because of a guilty conscience. As Albright herself put it, Kosovo presented "an opportunity to make up for the mistakes" that were made in Bosnia.

Well, then? Now that we are in the war—a war we would not have felt the need to start had we faced up to earlier challenges—the price of our mistakes has suddenly grown steeper, and the fates will surely not be so forgiving as they have been till now.

It would be wholly in keeping with the pattern of bluster and retreat that has led us to our present pass if we were once again, in effect, to cut and run. Not that we would just quit, or surrender. Rather, we would camouflage our loss, or even call it a victory. Under a diplomatic settlement involving Russia or the UN, or both, Milosevic might give us a face-saving exit. That could entail a partition of Kosovo that would cede parts of it to the Albanians while rewarding Serbia with the areas of greatest historical significance or economic value, "cleansed" of their former Albanian inhabitants. More likely, it would rest on a signed piece of paper solemnly affirming the right of all Kosovar refugees to return to their homes.

Such pieces of paper exist with respect to the refugees from the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. Today, nearly four years after Dayton, precious few of those refugees have returned; who remembers, or cares? Just as we have kidded ourselves about the efficacy of our actions in Bosnia, Iraq, and Rwanda, we could kid ourselves about Kosovo, too. But as in the case of Saddam, so in the case of Milosevic, it is only ourselves we would be kidding. If we were to settle now for a phony resolution, we would infallibly set the stage for still greater challenges, in the Balkans and elsewhere, and likely sound the death knell of NATO as an effective force.

That is hardly to say that the other option before us is free of serious risks of its own. This option is to harken to Douglas MacArthur's observation that in war there is no substitute for victory. Once Milosevic turned his wrath on the entire Albanian population of Kosovo, the legal and moral grounds for prosecuting this war to victory became much stronger than they were when we started it. And, despite the warnings of some military analysts, there can be no doubt that our armed forces would be more than a match for Serbia.

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Here, too, however, the unworthy sources of our conduct have come back to haunt us, this time in our failure to fund the forces necessary to fight two regional wars, even in close sequence, much less at the same time. Already, in the ominous words of General Richard Hawley, head of the Air Force's combat command, shortages of munitions and trained personnel, directly attributable in both cases to budget cuts, have created a "desperate need" for "a significant retrenchment in commitments for a significant period of time." Deploying a large ground force to Kosovo or Serbia will thus be an arduous undertaking, and one that will assuredly make us vulnerable in other parts of the world, presenting a temptation to the likes of Saddam—by late April, we had to curtail our enforcement of the no-fly zones over Iraq because the planes were needed in the Balkans—or the rulers of North Korea.

Those are foreseeable dangers, but war also often brings unexpected consequences, as we were reminded by the unintentional bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade. One of the few foreign-policy goals to which President Clinton has devoted assiduous attention (in part because of the domestic electoral benefits it apparently entailed) has been to cultivate a "strategic partnership" with Beijing. Suddenly, in one stroke, all the warm glow of repeated summit meetings with Zhu Rongji and Jiang Zemin—not to mention high-technology sales and innumerable other gestures of friendship—turned to frost. Sino-American relations are more troubled than at any time since the Cultural Revolution, and they will not soon be put right.

Such considerations have been enough to persuade many Americans, including many conservatives, either that the war is unwinnable or that the price of winning it will cancel out any potential benefits. This view sees only our current weakness, and is blind to our underlying strength. We have prevailed in war before, despite being ill-prepared, and despite having to pay for our unreadiness in the heavy coin of casualties and increased vulnerability. And we have coped with the unforeseen contingencies, often also at a price. But it is important to recognize that such is the awful nature of the choices put before us by the repeatedly compromised record of the past decade.

Whether we will learn a lesson from our current predicament remains to be seen. Even a President who came to office bent on avoiding international entanglements has discovered, after a fashion, that America's interests and values and its central position in global politics make that impossible. It follows that we must equip ourselves with forces commensurate with the burdens that, in one form or another, we are bound to assume—and with the courage to face them squarely. In addition to the urgent necessity of ending the war in Serbia with the defeat of Milosevic, the fundamental and no less urgent task before us is to confront and overcome the spirit of avoidance, self-indulgence, and pusillanimity that has led us in so brief a span from a condition of abundant security to one of looming peril.

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The New Snake Oil: A Field Guide

Samuel McCracken

Last November, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (*JAMA*) published a special issue on alternative medicine. It was surprising that the elders of the AMA should have countenanced such respectful attention to so blatant a challenge to their hegemony; the subsequent dismissal of the journal's editor over an ostensibly unrelated matter of judgment suggests that they did not. But at least as surprising was the news within the issue itself: in a 1997 survey, 42 percent of Americans reported having used at least one of sixteen varieties of alternative therapy.

The special issue of *JAMA* is only one of many recent signs of the growing respectability of alternative medicine. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Washington, D.C., harbors an office of alternative medicine about which I shall have more to say below. In a less exalted venue, one may randomly pick up a book on the home use of homeopathy and find a highly supportive preface by, no less, a faculty member at the Georgetown University medical school. And then there is the phenomenon of Andrew Weil, M.D., the best-selling author and recommender of many alternative therapies who directs a program in "integrative medicine" at the University of Arizona medical school.

Something is clearly afoot.

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There is no compact and lucid definition of alternative medicine, other than that it comprises medicine not taught (until very recently) in medical schools or employed in hospitals. But in surveying the universe of the alternative, the obvious place to start is with homeopathy. Although various therapies imported from the third world are older, in the West, homeopathy has seniority.

Homeopathy's appeal is probably based on the simplicity, clarity, and, for lack of a better word, the niceness of the theories of its late-18th-century proponent, the German physician Samuel Hahnemann. Briefly, Hahnemann held that the causes of disease were essentially unknowable, but that symptoms were both caused and cured by one and the same substance. Quinine is the typical example: in large amounts, it causes the chills associated with malaria; in small amounts, it relieves them. Thus, the homeopathic pharmacopoeia was developed by administering a substance to a healthy person and seeing whether symptoms resulted. This was called "proving." Once a substance was "proved," the next step was to dilute it sufficiently to produce a homeopathic remedy that, following the principle that like cures like, would alleviate or indeed extinguish the symptoms.

Over the past two centuries, homeopathy has had its ups and downs. At its high point, it boasted nearly as many adherents in the medical profession as did allopathy—the forerunner of today's mainstream medicine. The Sears catalogue at the beginning of this century contained the whole ho-

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meopathic armamentarium, labeled in two styles: for home use, the vials bore the name of the medical condition to be treated; for the doctor's office, the Latin name of the medication itself.

By the mid-20th century, although homeopathy continued to be quite vigorous in Europe, it had dwindled here to a few elderly practitioners and their patients. (My father's mother stuck by her homeopath until he died on her at eighty or so; she remained remarkably vigorous past ninety, complaining all the while that she had not passed a day in good health since the end of the McKinley administration.) But today homeopathy is back with a bang, and impossible to escape. Not only vitamin stores and "nutrition centers" but drugstores and even grocery stores stock a wide range of homeopathic remedies arranged in racks of vials, each of them bearing the Latin name of the active "principle" within (usually some plant) and an indication of what it is good for. Homeopathy has so penetrated the popular consciousness that one can now find novels for which it provides both the energizing idea and the plot.

Homeopathy began to get a grip on the American imagination in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. But it was an import; the next major developments in alternative medicine were homebrewed in the burgeoning economies of the post-Civil War period. In 1874, Andrew F. Still, a physician of Kirksville, Missouri, came up with the notion that all illness was caused by misalignments of the spinal column, and devised a realignment process that he named osteopathy—the treatment of bones. Today, at the dawn of the third millennium, osteopathy has essentially passed from heterodoxy to orthodoxy. Osteopaths now pursue a course of study nearly identical to traditional medicine; some years ago, California began allowing osteopathic schools of medicine to award the M.D. degree. But even as they have embraced the mainstream curriculum, osteopaths continue to study the spine very closely, and they enjoy a reputation, often justified, for being better at back pain than their traditional colleagues.

The year after Dr. Still's discovery, Mary Baker Eddy published the first edition of *Science and Health*, promulgating the basic doctrines of Christian Science. Although some might bridle at calling her a figure in the history of alternative medicine, Mrs. Eddy's system resembles other 19th-century alternatives in offering an all-sufficient theory of health. The views of several contemporary schools are surprisingly similar to Mrs. Eddy's, albeit without the religious underpinnings.

Hardly had Mrs. Eddy's book appeared when, in 1876, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg became medical director of what was shortly to become the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Kellogg's best-known legacy is the cereal company founded to market his greatest therapeutic discovery, the corn flake. But he was even more influential in propagating the notion that most if not all diseases are caused by the wrong diet. Although his institution, known to its devotees as "the San," has been gone for 70 years, much alternative nutritional theory descends from him.

In 1895, osteopathy gained an imitator in the form of chiropractic. Daniel D. Palmer, a merchant of Davenport, Iowa, concluded that all illness was caused by a spinal-column maladjustments—known as subluxations—that impinged upon nerves. Chiropractic has had a gaudier history than osteopathy, spawning schismatic schools of treatment.

At about the same time that chiropractic made its appearance, the last great 19th-century medical alternative, naturopathy, was being perfected by the wonderfully named Benedict Lust. The November 1921 issue of Dr. Lust's organ, *Herald of Health and Naturopathy*, pictures a remarkably far-flung and flourishing enterprise. Dr. Lust himself was the proprietor of two large health resorts, Yungborn in Butler, New Jersey, and a similar institution in Tangerine, Florida. The tenets of naturopathy then included vegetarianism and fruitarianism, walking barefoot, and lots of sun and fresh air. Its modern-day variant is somewhat more complex.

What all the foregoing alternatives, including homeopathy, have in common is that they were created in reaction to perceived or actual defects of contemporary mainstream medicine. That is true of today's alternative medicine as well, which has under its wing not only the therapies listed above but a larger set imported from the third world or from older folk traditions.

Two of these are comprehensive systems of medicine, with many centuries of history in Asia: traditional Chinese medicine, now often called TCM, and ayurvedic medicine, which arose in India. The two share a number of features, including a belief in energy flows in the body, known as *qi* in China and as *prana* in India. Both systems use herbal medicines and rely on diet, and both emphasize the power of the body to heal itself, often with a little help from herbal prescriptions.

Acupuncture is both a part of TCM and increasingly a freestanding art practiced both by specialists and as an add-on by other healers, including dentists. It became famous overnight in 1971 when the

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celebrated reporter James Reston contracted appendicitis while covering President Richard Nixon's trip to China. He was treated in Beijing's Anti-Imperialist Hospital, and in addition to a mainstream appendectomy he received acupuncture and herbal medicine as part of his postoperative care. Writing up the experience in the *New York Times*, he seemed a thoroughly satisfied customer.

Acupuncture elaborates the theory of energy flow. Acupuncturists believe that there are invisible energy channels on the skin, known as meridians, along which are sited locations into which the acupuncturist inserts a thin, sharp needle. Depending on where the needle or (as is often the case) needles go, there will be different effects. Much of the acupuncture practiced in this country is a form of analgesia, as it was in Reston's case.

Three other alternatives make use of the same meridians as acupuncture. One is acupressure: acupuncture without the needles. Another, more esoteric, is moxibustion, which involves burning a bit of an herb, *Artemisia vulgaris*, called *moxa* in Japan, in the vicinity of an acupoint; a study of it is reported in *JAMA*'s special issue. The third, shiatsu, is a modern Japanese adaptation of acupressure.

Standing astride the Pacific is macrobiotics, which originated in Japan but has enjoyed its greatest development in the United States. Macrobiotics is often characterized as a diet, and indeed its practice is almost entirely a matter of sticking to an austere regimen based primarily on boiled brown rice, to which are added certain sea vegetables and small amounts of fish. But its claims are very large, for it sees all diseases as dietary in nature, and the macrobiotic diet as a true panacea.

ANOTHER GROUP of alternatives is not Eastern but European in provenance and/or vogue. For example, flower-essence therapy, devised by an English homeopath at the turn of the century, employs diluted flower extracts (although it ignores the homeopathic law of similars). Aromatherapy, reported to have been used both on the Queen Mother and on Lady Thatcher, has its own history and mobilizes various essential oils in more modest dilution.

Foot reflexology must not be confused with acupressure. About 90 years ago, Dr. William Fitzgerald is said to have systematized a good deal of ancient wisdom under the name of Zone Therapy. The body, he postulated, was divided into ten equal zones, running from head to toe, and these zones were related to whatever subcutaneous arrangements lay beneath them. Thus, stimulating any point in a zone would stimulate everything else within the same zone. Somewhat later, a therapist named Eunice Ingham added the thought that each zone could be treated by appropriate pressure on a part of the foot alone: on the sole, for instance, there is a place that can be pressed in order to treat liver malfunctions.

Then there is "bodywork." This is in effect a congeries of massage types—some gentle, some very forceful—each with its own theory, technique, and claims of curative powers beyond simple relaxation. Rolfing is named for its inventor, Ida Rolf; the Feldenkrais method for Moshe Feldenkrais. There is an immense number of these variants, many of them refinements by disciples of the original founder's teaching. What binds them together is the belief that it is possible to control the soul—mind, spirit, whatever—by controlling the body.

The opposite principle—controlling the mind controls the body—informs a different group of alternatives, of which biofeedback and therapeutic hypnosis are the best-known. In this category, too, belong guided imagery and visualization, processes whereby one imagines what one wants to happen—e.g., bullets striking a tumor one wants to have killed.

Still another class of alternatives involves a pharmacopoeia composed of agents other than herbs. Bee pollen and royal jelly are among the most familiar, but substances as different as shark cartilage and oxygen are in use among alternative practitioners. These methods include the once-famous Niehans cell therapy, chelation therapy, and enzyme therapy.

Some years ago, there arose a dental heresy that has evolved into a branch known as biological or holistic dentistry. On the assumption that the mercury in amalgam fillings could leach into the body and cause disease, a simple if time-consuming and expensive treatment was developed: drilling out all one's amalgam fillings and replacing them with other materials. Biological dentists today make use of a variety of alternatives—complements, they would probably call them—like acupuncture and homeopathy, as well as nutritional supplements.

Finally, there are alternative therapies that are difficult to classify, including the use of magnetism as medicine and the long-established practice of colonic irrigation, to which in recent decades has been added the fillip of coffee enemas. Moreover, each of the alternatives I have discussed has cognates of various sorts, and the survey itself is far from complete. Nor have I listed faith healing or a variety of nostrums that have been formally adjudicated as frauds. Suffice it to say that there are a great many alternatives out there.

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Now to the obvious and possibly tactless question: do any of these therapies work?

In assessing pharmaceuticals, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) takes up a prior question, probably derived from the first law of Hippocrates: "Do no harm." That is, the FDA begins with the question not of efficacy but of safety. This is sensible, because no manufacturer would waste time on the money- and labor-intensive licensing process for a medication that had not already shown substantial efficacy in controlled animal tests. The FDA's authority kicks in when it is proposed to test a substance on humans, and safety is a reasonable place to start.

The plain fact is, however, that very few of the alternative theories I have been discussing have been rigorously examined either for efficacy or for safety. Nor, frankly, is this issue much engaged by the promoters of alternative medicine. The authors of *Your Guide to Complementary Medicine*, for example, are content to explain *how* each alternative works rather than showing that it does work. Otherwise, exponents of the various schools tend to support assertions of their products' efficacy with anecdotal evidence, complaining all the while about the inclination of mainstream medicine to dismiss such evidence.

Indeed, within the framework of mainstream medicine—and of science generally—"anecdotal evidence" is something close to a term of reproach, and for good reason. Life, after all, is an unremitting sequence of anecdotal evidence. As individuals, that is all we have. If we are to make something of it, we must assemble, usually with the help of others, a vast array of anecdotes that can then be tested against one another and ordered according to some rational, even skeptical, scheme, which probably will include statistical analysis.

The need for such analysis in the present case should be clear. The anecdotes presented by most advocates of alternative medicine concern instances in which a particular nostrum seems to have been effective. One does not often hear from supporters of *x* a striking account of how *x* failed, or produced unacceptable side effects. Yet nothing is likelier than that such anecdotes exist.

Take acupuncture. The stories in its favor emphasize its painlessness and benignity, but recently I heard an anecdote from a friend. He had visited a highly recommended acupuncturist to see what could be done for serious pain that had proved intractable to the ministrations of mainstream medicine. The insertion of needles had indeed proved painless. But acupuncture itself had a different effect on his pain, increasing it over a period of ten days to the point where he terminated treatment. One will not read anecdotes of this kind in books about acupuncture, but they are the sort to which mainstream researchers must pay attention.

To find anything approaching an organized survey of efficacies from within the alternative movement itself, one must turn to *The Alternative Medicine Handbook** by Barrie Cassileth. A cancer researcher affiliated with the University of North Carolina, Duke, and Harvard, Cassileth was a founding member of the advisory council of the office of alternative medicine at NIH. Hers is an impressively thorough treatment of the field, and in what follows I rely on her nuanced judgments.

Since homeopathy is the senior alternative therapy, and the only one that once was a full-fledged alternative in the sense that tea is an alternative to coffee, its claims to efficacy are the place to start.

At first glance, the homeopathic principle—that is, the supposition that like cures like, especially in reduced doses—sufficiently resembles mainstream immunization theory to entitle it to a hearing. But one obvious difference is that immunization has a theory behind it that is persuasive in its own terms and congruent with scientific theory in general. By contrast, Samuel Hahnemann taught that not only is the actual cause of disease unknown, it is unknowable.

Perhaps more importantly, homeopathic practice flatly contradicts basic chemistry and physics. According to Hahnemann, the more dilute a homeopathic remedy, the more powerful it will be. The trick, at each stage of dilution, is to "potentize" the medication—by giving it a good shaking. This dictum has led to dilutions so extreme that any given vial of homeopathic medicine may contain not a single molecule of the medicine itself. Instead, it will contain water, plus an unknown concentration of contaminants—animal, mineral, or vegetable.

Advocates of homeopathy have come up with a neat rejoinder to this problem: by a process not understood (and perhaps not to be understood), water somehow "remembers" what it was once mixed with, even after the last molecule has departed. But, unfortunately, there is no evidence for the notion of liquid memories; and, as Cassileth points out, if such memories should somehow be proved to exist, the liquid would presumably have to remember all the various impurities it once contained as well.

It is, of course, always possible that our present understanding of chemistry and physics is wrong and in need of major revision. After all, many of us

* Norton, 340 pp., $19.95.

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were once taught that the moons of the outer planets were cold, dead masses of rock, and yet we have lived to see a volcano erupting on a moon of Jupiter. But the reason why physicists and chemists are not rushing to account for homeopathy is that, unlike in the Jupiter case, homeopathy does not present new evidence but merely a new "theory," and one that is debonairly indifferent to its inability to account for any facts outside its own microcosm. Astronomers might as well rush to refute the cosmology of the Muggletonians, who believed not only in a geocentric universe but in a deity who looked much like thee and me except for being six inches tall.

Could it be that homeopathy works despite rather than because of its theory? Might it be an efficacious alternative with a ludicrous but irrelevant theory? The evidence is against this conclusion, too. The one study claiming success for homeopathy to have appeared in a peer-reviewed medical journal concerned infant diarrhea; according to Cassileth, it has been roundly exposed for inherent biases that invalidate its conclusion.

IF THE proponents and sponsors of homeopathy—many of them holders of M.D.'s, trained in medical research—were to design and execute rigorous studies shedding more light on the efficacy of their discipline, that in itself would be news, and would certainly create an irresistible demand for further studies. But they have not done so—and neither, *mutatis mutandis*, has anyone connected with any other alternative medicine. Given the grandiose claims made for most of them, this is a damning fact, especially in today's environment of deepening cynicism toward the medical establishment. As things stand, not one alternative medicine can show the validated efficacy—of the sort enjoyed, say, by aspirin—that would establish its therapeutic claims as anything more than puffery.

But suppose the grandiosity dial is turned down; what then? Some therapies, it is true, can claim a limited usefulness. My friend's experience aside, acupuncture has indeed been shown to control some cases of chronic pain, the likely explanation being that it is a highly effective placebo. Hypnotism, too, seems to control pain—Cassileth cites the example of a fifteen-year-old girl with an intense allergy to pharmacological anesthesia who underwent heart surgery fully awake, without pain, and without even an aspirin.

Like hypnosis, biofeedback has also shown its usefulness within mainstream medicine, boasting success in treating alcoholism, drug abuse, chronic pain, and other problems. And yoga, too, has to its credit a wide range of documented benefits that can be explained as the consequence of relaxation. Within careful limitations, these therapies do sometimes seem to work.

But for the great majority of alternative therapies, not only is there no scientific validation of any kind, there is frequently evidence to the contrary. Colonic irrigation, for example, has been studied closely enough by mainstream researchers to have had its claims thoroughly disproved. This is fairly easily done, since the therapy is based on the idea that food remains attached to the wall of the colon where it quietly rots and becomes toxic. Every time a surgeon opens a bowel, the falsity of this idea is demonstrated anew.

Among nutritional theories, macrobiotics has the most comprehensive claims for efficacy—and, pursued with discrimination, it does offer the benefits of a low-fat diet. But these same benefits are available without limiting oneself mainly to brown rice. In its earliest formulation, moreover, macrobiotics was also troubled with a side effect for which the technical term is death. That is, when followed by a customer with exceptional willpower, the diet resulted in literal starvation, and before macrobiotics was modified to include fish, a number of pioneers were forced to give the Cause their All.

Different and more diverse threats are posed by herbal remedies and dietary supplements. *Consumer Reports* has recently (March 1999) published an extensive survey that raises alarming questions about the state of these products' regulation. Unlike homeopathic medicines, supplements are not entirely outside the reach of the FDA; but in 1994 Congress and the President sharply restricted the FDA's power over them as long as they do not claim to cure disease. It turns out that much depends on how you define "claim to cure disease."

For example, as *CR* points out, the phrase "alleviates constipation" is a claim to cure a disease; but "promotes regularity" is not. Or consider the label of GarliPure™ capsules, two of which will provide you with 1,000 milligrams (or one gram, or 1/28 of an ounce) of garlic; for a daily dose, double the numbers. Now, why would one want to ingest two grams of garlic a day if one cannot taste it, even at the reasonable cost of 25 cents? At the top of the label, we are told why: this supplement "helps maintain a healthy cholesterol level." But see the note: "This statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent disease."

That is an astonishing set of sentences. Even putting aside the fact that "helps maintain" is a fudge

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for "maintains," surely the only criterion of a "healthy cholesterol level" is a level that does not cause disease. Or are we simply to believe that, if one already has good cholesterol numbers, this product will assist in maintaining them? Whichever, potential customers are being lured in the expectation that they can substitute moderately-priced garlic pills for the high-priced cholesterol-maintaining medicine prescribed by their doctors, while at the same time being told *sub rosa* that they cannot.

Reading such labels, one remembers which President signed the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA)—an enactment stipulating that a dietary supplement is presumed safe unless the FDA receives a significant number of reports to the contrary. (Mere medications, as I have noted, must be proved safe even before they are proved effective.) Under this bizarre law, simply by calling a substance a nutritional supplement one can market it as a medicine—"helps maintain a healthy cholesterol level"—and wait until it goes wrong often enough to attract the attention of the authorities.

Consumer Reports is illuminating on the ways in which such supplements can indeed go wrong. Chapparal, for example, is claimed to purify the blood and to fight acne and cancer (a coupling that is itself quintessentially "alternative"). *CR* cites no evidence either way, but the side effects have been identified: acute nonviral hepatitis and rapidly developing liver damage leading to transplants. Comfrey, claimed to alleviate arthritis, ulcers, and pulmonary disease, has caused cancer in laboratory animals. Ephedra, claimed to control weight and boost energy, sometimes achieves the first by means of a side effect that can kill you.

True, any number of real medications have had the same side effect. But they are available only by prescription. Moreover, when they are advertised they are accompanied by a full page or more of fine print describing those side effects. Under DSHEA, the American people provide the nutritional-supplement industry with a 50-state laboratory whose test subjects cannot give informed consent because they do not even know they are being used as guinea pigs.

In the end, whatever the effect or noneffect of a particular supplement, the most widespread danger this class of therapies poses is, so to speak, generic. (The same goes for alternative medicine as a whole.) The pursuit of a useless remedy, even if it is in itself harmless, may close the way to an efficacious course of treatment. If the condition being addressed is life-threatening, the danger is commensurately graver. The stated indications for many supplements are phrased in terms of symptoms: chronic pain, headaches, faulty digestion, and so on. Alternative medicine is not terribly concerned with what lies behind symptoms, but many of these can be the warning signs of diseases like cancer.

The danger is not that herbal or nutritional supplements will be used by terminal cancer patients—to whom they pose a risk of zero—but that they will be used, to no therapeutic end, by people whose cancer is just beginning to be apparent. For such patients, they present the terrible risk of delaying real treatment to a time when it will be less effective or indeed fail. The better an alternative therapy is at suppressing symptoms, the higher the risk.

If the evidence in favor of alternative medicine is so thin, why, then, according to *JAMA*, have 42 percent of Americans availed themselves of it? Are we dealing here with people who cannot be expected to know better, or to afford better? Evidently not, as observation of the clientele at any upscale health store will confirm. A recent article in *New York* magazine finds the vogue of alternative medicine particularly well-entrenched in the upper reaches of the city's conspicuous consumers.

One explanation may have to do with the one-man industry known as Andrew Weil, M.D., whose effectiveness as an advocate would be hard to exaggerate. Weil is intelligent, learned, and shrewd; he can be a charming writer; and he has the gift of saying quite irrational things in a thoroughly rational manner. Besides his natural talents, his credibility is strengthened by two Harvard degrees, and he benefits as well from a memorably striking appearance, sealed by a beard that would put Edward Lear in the shade.

Weil is certainly a success: he has a daily web column sponsored by a vitamin seller, and a search on Amazon.com currently yields no fewer than 54 listings. Although his most recent winner is *Eight Weeks to Optimum Health*, more indicative of his basic orientation is his first book, *The Natural Mind*, published in 1971 and still very much in print in a revised 1985 edition.

By the term "natural mind" Weil does not mean the minds we are born with. Rather, he quite explicitly means the drugged mind, or, as he prefers to call it, the stoned mind. With, he writes, the help of various controlled substances, some of them decidedly artificial, it is possible to experience reality directly. For reality is not something that exists independent of our consciousness; consciousness is all there is, and the important thing about facts is that there aren't any.

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Survivors of the 1960's will remember that a great many trees gave their last full measure of devotion that this sort of thing could be published. If Weil has not let it pass beyond the mists now that he has an entirely new career as the guru of integrative medicine, the reason may be that he really believes it—believes, that is, that there are no facts, and that we see straighter drunk than sober—and is proud to be the expounder of that doctrine.

It is against this necessary background, in any event, that we should view not only *Eight Days to Optimum Health* but *Spontaneous Healing*, the 1995 book by Weil that marked a watershed in the legitimation of alternative medicine (and of which *Eight Weeks* is largely a repackaging).

A SUBSTANTIAL portion of *Spontaneous Healing* is given over to Dr. Robert Fulford, an osteopath of the old school who has declined to join his colleagues in adding drugs and surgery to his repertoire but has stood by bone manipulation alone. Fulford is also a practitioner of a schismatic species of osteopathy known as craniosacral therapy, which specializes in the bones from the cranium to the sacrum (the remainder of our once-useful tail) and is itself based on a theory, promulgated in 1939 by the osteopath William Sutherland, that energy circulates along a route from the skull to the tailbone in a process analogous to the respiration of oxygen through the pulmonary system. This "primary" respiration, as Sutherland called it, is driven by constant rhythmic movements of the bones of the cranium, expansion and contraction of the hemispheres of the brain, and other movements of the rest of the craniosacral complex.

As summarized by Weil, it is hard to tell whether Sutherland knew what if anything was being respired here, or how the mechanism was supposed to affect the operations of the nervous system. But Robert Fulford, whom Weil offers as almost an ideal exemplar of the physician, has developed his practice almost entirely in terms of Sutherland's notions. As a frequent visitor to Fulford's office, Weil reports a number of impressive results. These include the case of a friend, a nonbeliever in osteopathy, who was cured of a devastating bowel affliction that had baffled a world-class gastroenterologist, and the perhaps less striking case of an injury to Weil himself. Fulford has also routinely ended nagging childhood ear infections—media otitis—in a single treatment, by, as he puts it, "beating the heck out of their tailbones." As Weil epitomizes his observations, "Dr. Fulford did not succeed with everyone, but he had a higher percentage of successful outcomes than any other practitioner I have met."

This is another sentence that might fairly be called astonishing. Note the conspicuous absence of even a ballpark estimate of Fulford's *actual* success rate, and note, too, the rather odd qualifier, "I have met." Somehow, one doubts that every time Weil meets a practitioner he inquires about success rates, or gets an answer, or pauses to evaluate its correctness.

One obvious difficulty with the theory of primary respiration would seem to be the fact that, anatomists assure us, the bones of the skull do not move. Yet, under Fulford's tutelage—he allegedly has a touch so sensitive that he can feel a human hair under seventeen sheets of paper—Weil says he learned to feel these movements himself. It would be interesting to see documentation of this claim, just as it would be interesting to replicate the study (cited by Weil) at the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine that "confirmed" motion of the cranial bones. Since Fulford is not the only craniosacral therapist in the country, more convincing testimony still might be derived from a double-blind test of his colleagues' achievements. It is especially disappointing that the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, directed by Andrew Weil, has not undertaken such a study, for if craniosacral therapy really does live up to his billing, it would come close to providing a solution for the oft-proclaimed crisis in American health care.

WHAT ALL this points to is the essential romanticism (to use the most neutral term at hand) of the movement for which Andrew Weil serves as point man. This romanticism—a legacy, in its current, virulent incarnation, of the selfsame spiritual orientation one finds preserved in amber in Weil's *The Natural Mind*—forms the starkest possible contrast with mainstream medicine.

Mainstream medicine has long been a cooperative and pragmatic enterprise: Drs. A and B publish a study showing that *x* cures *y*; Drs. C and D publish another that shows *x* does not cure *y*. *Sic et contra*. Eventually, by the time Drs. U and V enter the fray, a preponderance of judgment has been formed, deriving from processes conducted under generally agreed-upon ground rules. Without idealizing mainstream medicine, which like any human enterprise is subject to the normal quotient of human frailties, there can be little doubt that its search for the truth is grounded in the scientific method and limited only by those frailties.

Nothing like this can be said for alternative medicine. For one thing, the typical alternative

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theory is formed by a single romantic hero, sometimes a grand heretic like Samuel Hahnemann, M.D., sometimes an inspired naïf like Daniel D. Palmer, grocer of Davenport, Iowa. The pattern has been widely repeated: Benedict Lust invented naturopathy, Moshe Feldenkrais invented the Feldenkrais method, Ida Rolf invented Rolfing: we know their names in a way that we do not, and cannot, and need not know who invented diagnostics. This is a mark very much in favor of the latter, and against the former.

For another thing, in alternative medicine error and human frailty are not things to fight or overcome but things to ignore—or to exploit. Perhaps most exploitable of all in this regard is the universal human desire to believe that, by dint of "natural" methods, the ills to which all flesh is heir can somehow be negotiated without discomfort, without expense, and especially without pain. The attraction of such a philosophy to a generation now beginning to receive irrefutable evidence that it may not live forever cannot be exaggerated.

Here is an encomium lavished on homeopathy by an M.D. at Georgetown:

> [W]e sense the rightness of a healing system that conceives of all symptoms as parts of a larger whole, that appears to stimulate the body's natural healing force rather than attack its enemies. Homeopathy seems to work with us, not on us.

This sort of "medicine" has an appeal that goes straight back to Samuel Hahnemann himself. It is the appeal of the easier, indeed the easiest, way.

The orthodox doctors of the 18th century routinely relied on "heroic" treatments: huge doses of things like violent laxatives; painful techniques like blistering and bloodletting. By contrast, Hahnemann offered a road to Wellsville calculated to avoid even mild indigestion. Neither he nor any other alternative theorist would ever have been so incautious as even to mention the word surgery. That has been, *mutatis mutandis*, the appeal of almost every "alternative" offered in the two centuries since.

SO WHAT? As we have seen, alternative medicine goes back a long way, and quackery still farther. But the current phenomenon is qualitatively different from its predecessors.

The University of Arizona is not the only respectable institution providing a home for "complementary" or alternative medicine (increasingly known by the joint acronym CAM). Others include Columbia, Stanford, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Iowa, and the University of Minnesota. These programs have another thing in common: they are all funded by the federal government.

Which brings us back to the National Institutes of Health. Its center for alternative medicine was established in 1992 at the urging of Senator Tom Harkin (D., Iowa); by 1998, it had expanded into the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM). Although its funding is still modest compared to mainstream centers, the trendline is telling: from $2 million in 1992 to $50 million in 1999. The center's purpose is to conduct research into the possible effectiveness of various alternative therapies, a mandate it carries out by supporting some of the institutions listed above, as well as Bastyr University (a naturopathic institution in Seattle) and a consortium linking five colleges of chiropractic and two state universities.

It remains to be seen what this research will lead to. But already the very existence of NCCAM provides the most authoritative form of legitimation imaginable, conferring upon the movement something like mainstream status without requiring anything like a demonstration of the intellectual rigor that normally accompanies such status. In its train, we may expect others to follow.

In most states, most medical schools are publicly funded, which means that they are subject to political and indeed popular pressure. To judge by a recent issue of the University of Iowa's alumni magazine, programs in alternative medicine are likely to become *de rigueur* at such schools. An article on the Iowa program regales us with the story of a seriously ill patient who, dissatisfied with her mainstream care, takes matters into her own hands, administers a variety of herbal and other treatments, and in time feels cured. Exactly the sort of case that merits critical scrutiny—but nothing in the article suggests it will get such scrutiny at the medical school of the University of Iowa.

The tradition of mainstream medicine is characterized by the constant testing of proposed new treatments; it is of the essence that the arena of testing not be tainted by prejudice, neither for nor against. But whenever medical schools accommodate new programs in alternative medicine, they also accommodate the severely relaxed standards of evidence that disfigure it. Over the long run, this cannot but weaken the standards applied in mainstream medicine itself. It may be true that, at present, the medical establishment is still using a prudently long spoon to sup with the alternative. But such spoons have a way of shortening, and the possible consequences to the national health are deeply disturbing.

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Guns, Tobacco, Big Macs—and the Courts

Peter W. Huber

THE TRIGGER was pulled by a friend, who had bought the gun on the street. Steven Fox, a Queens, New York, teenager, was badly injured by the .25-caliber bullet, which remains lodged in his head. The gun disappeared. Nobody knows who manufactured or sold it, or just how it found its way to Queens.

But we do not need to know. Even before the recent, murderous rampage at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, a sizable majority of the public already agreed: too many guns, too freely sold. Our legislatures, however, have been at a loss. Although Congress has drawn the line at Uzis, it mostly ignores Berettas and Colts, and although it passed a "Gun-Free School Zones Act" in 1990, the Supreme Court struck down the law in 1995—the Constitution, the Court decided, confides the particulars of school safety to the states.* The states, for their part, cannot seem to agree about guns at all. New York enacts strict laws, South Carolina does not. "The legislatures have not been capable, up to now, of dealing with these problems on any comprehensive basis," remarked Judge Jack Weinstein in an interview after the Steven Fox trial.

So the necessary votes are being found, instead, in the courts. It was in Judge Weinstein's courtroom that 25 gun manufacturers were sued by Steven Fox and his mother for "negligent marketing." The plaintiffs alleged that manufacturers had flooded the market in Southern states where the gun laws are weak, and the guns then moved inexorably up Route 95, the "iron pipeline," for illegal distribution in New York. Although the defendants replied that interstate gunrunning was not their responsibility but the federal government's, the jury, after six days of deadlock, found fifteen manufacturers liable and nine responsible for one or more of three shootings. Based on a complex "market-share" apportionment, three manufacturers of .25-caliber handguns were ordered to pay 13 percent of the assessed damages—$500,000—to Steven Fox and his mother.

It seems a cheap enough price to pay for a bullet in the brain, and certainly not anything to bother a rich corporation. But the battle has just begun. In the next round, individual plaintiffs like Fox will be replaced by cities: Bridgeport, Chicago, New Orleans, Atlanta, and Miami. That such political entities can do far better as plaintiffs than individuals has been dramatically shown by tobacco liti-

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* *United States* v. *Lopez*. The ruling overturned the conviction of Alfonso Lopez, a 12th-grade student, who on March 10, 1992, had brought a concealed .38 caliber handgun and five bullets to Edison High School in San Antonio, Texas.

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gation. Suits brought by New York, California, Pennsylvania, and other states have culminated in a 25-year, $206 billion settlement against tobacco manufacturers. Florida, Texas, Mississippi, and Minnesota, have settled separately for a total of $40 billion. The big news in tobacco litigation is not that Patricia Henley, a Marlboro smoker, was awarded $51.5 million by a San Francisco jury last February. It is that Bill Clinton has ordered Attorney General Janet Reno to win one for the rest of us, too.

Just how much fixing of a broken political process can judges like Jack Weinstein deliver? Far too much, in the opinion of some, who worry that after guns, the next targets in line will be chocolates, kitchen knives, or McDonald's artery-clogging burgers. But it will not happen that way; not at all. Guns and tobacco are in real peril, but Big Macs are not. And *that* is the most alarming fact of all.

WE USED to tackle our poisons by quite different means. The campaign for Prohibition, for example, was launched in 1906. Over a decade passed before a two-thirds vote could be mustered in Congress for submission of the 18th Amendment to the states. By the time it was finally ratified in 1919, 33 states, covering 63 percent of the population, already had their own bans in place.

In the main, judges of that era were as cautious as the political branches were bold. Consider then-Judge Benjamin Cardozo's concurrence in *Palsgraf* v. *Long Island R. Company*, which stands to this day as the best-known opinion in all of tort law.

On August 24, 1924, the platform of a Long Island Railroad station in Brooklyn was crowded with people. A man dashed through the crowd and jumped onto a train pulling out of the station. Pushing and pulling to help him board, a guard and a conductor knocked loose a parcel he was carrying. "Bomb Blast Injures 13 in Station Crowd," the front page of the *New York Times* would report the next day. The parcel had contained fireworks, which were set off when they fell under the train's wheels. The owner of the parcel was never identified.

Helen Palsgraf, a forty-year-old Brooklyn janitor, was surely the unluckiest victim: one of the fireworks hit a penny scale some distance down the platform and knocked it onto her. She developed a bad stammer several days later, apparently from the shock. She sued the railroad, and a jury awarded her $6,000. By a four-to-three vote, however, New York's top court overturned the verdict, reasoning that the railroad could not have foreseen that this kind of carelessness by its employees would cause that kind of injury.

Cardozo's concurrence took an even stricter tack. The railroad, he wrote, simply owed no "duty of care" to such an "unforeseeable" plaintiff. Tort litigants should be permitted to trace out causal chains only so far—not far enough to track a push, a parcel, fireworks, a train's wheels, and a penny scale to Helen Palsgraf.

TODAY, IN Jack Weinstein's courtroom, litigants track their pyrotechnics the length of Route 95. It is fair to say, moreover, that Judge Weinstein welcomes long stories, and the big crowds that go with them. In 1972—in a case involving children injured by blasting caps—he pretty much invented the "market-share" theory of liability, later relied upon in Fox's case. The 1972 case involved thirteen children, six blasting-cap manufacturers (virtually the entire American industry), the manufacturers' trade association, 230 claims, and a demand for over $200 million in damages. In 1984, an Agent Orange trial in Weinstein's courtroom consolidated more than 600 separate suits against seven chemical companies—suits to resolve the claims of 2.4 million veterans, their wives, their children born and unborn, Australian and New Zealand veterans, and a few civilians. It culminated in a $180-million settlement.

What the Fox case adds, in a perfect complement to "market-share liability" at the back end, is "negligent marketing" at the front. Cases can henceforth be framed around an industry's "marketing" coming and going. It is innovations like these that have set the legal stage for the mega-tort suits now coming of age: if suits by individuals typically yield settlements and verdicts of six or seven digits, class actions easily get you to eight or nine, and the state tobacco suits have pushed things up to twelve. No corporation keeps that kind of money in its checking account, so the twelve digits are to be paid off on the installment plan, decades into the future.

But, the shocked manufacturers of guns and cigarettes protest, we sell a lawful product. Apparently they do not grasp what "lawful" means. "Well, ump," a batter once asked the legendary umpire Bill Klem, "is it a ball or a strike?" "It ain't nothing 'til I call it," Klem growled in reply. Judge Weinstein takes much the same view.

So he well may—for is this not what common-law judges have always done, deciding cases one by one, and making law as they go? But it is equally

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clear that baseball is not what it used to be. What has changed in the decades between Cardozo and Weinstein is not the strike zone; it is the game itself. It is as if the umpires had grown tired of just calling balls and strikes, and had set about adjudicating disputes among the fans. And not only the occasional altercation in the bleachers, but the comparative merits of Yankees and Braves fans themselves.

WHEN Fiorello La Guardia, the mayor of New York (1934-45), went after slot machines, he did not summon his tort lawyers; he summoned his sledgehammer. Today, too, big-city mayors and state governors already possess broad power to police, regulate, tax, and ban. The President of the United States possesses the broadest power of all. He does not need Janet Reno, plus twelve more votes from a federal jury, before Washington can collect its due from Philip Morris. Washington already takes in 24 cents a pack, and legislation floating around last year would have pushed that sum to $1.34; Clinton himself has come back this year with a 55-cent proposal. Although Steven Fox cannot order federal authorities to stop gunrunning on Route 95, the man who rules Washington surely can, with a stroke of his pen.

Except that Bill Clinton does not rule Washington by pen stroke; nobody does. Nor does Miami rule Florida, Minnesota rule tobacco country in North Carolina, or Queens rule rednecks in Alabama. Wherever you may be sitting, whether on a federal bench in Brooklyn or in your pickup truck in Birmingham, legislatures always appear "not capable" (in Jack Weinstein's words) of doing quite what you might like, even if you are a majority.

This holds true even for quite popular causes; we do not govern by plebiscite. There is a lot of anti-majoritarian friction in the political branches of our government, and it was put there on purpose. Single-issue groups have clout because strong, focused enthusiasm is supposed to count in our system of representative democracy. The legislative majority is always accommodating passionate, vocal minorities; the accommodation is what creates the majority, while it lasts.

Our old-fashioned political process is in fact surprisingly good at making pragmatic judgments about how far to push majority sentiment, and at deciding when wholesale "cures" of minority passions are going to entail higher social costs than hold-your-nose tolerance. Up till now, what representative democracy has told us is that Camels and Berettas still muster more support than cocaine and Uzis, that we can tax the Marlboro man 24 (federal) cents a pack and snuff him in public buildings but not in homes, that the federal government should leave a lot of discretion to the states (which can tax some more), and that, in policing Route 95 as much as we reasonably can, we should keep in mind the other porous borders, both here and abroad, that we have to attend to as well.

Up till now; but no longer. As New York has discovered, if you do not like where our society has so far come out on a given issue, you can have a take-charge judge glide over the friction of ordinary politics. Politics, after all, is fueled by money; it is under the sway of lobbyists and special interests; it is always subject to the baleful power of factions that are forever frustrating the popular will; and in its regional form it is always getting in the way of the national interest. None of that happens in Jack Weinstein's courtroom.

OF COURSE, others can locate their own take-charge judges, too, and have been known to do so. In 1962, an Alabama jury tried to impose damages on the manufacturer of a particularly noxious Yankee poison, the *New York Times*, which had published a civil-rights advertisement allegedly libeling an Alabama city commissioner. Luckily for the *Times*—which was, in those years, in quite precarious financial straits—the Supreme Court put a halt to such suits by means of a far-reaching interpretation of the First Amendment. More recently, Alabama courts have been notoriously eager to settle the score with Yankee banks and insurance companies. In 1996, it again took the Supreme Court to overturn a $2-million verdict against the car manufacturer BMW. An Alabama physician had sought damages for BMW's nationwide practice of touching up paint nicks that occurred in transit before selling its cars as "new."

Needless to say, no one physician, judge, or jury can single-handedly rid the nation of tobacco, guns, the libelous *New York Times*, or blemished BMW's. A single Jack Weinstein can get a tort movement started, but to finish the job requires real people power. It will take a long, slow accumulation of six-to-seven digit verdicts. Or, alternatively, a short, fast accumulation of the nine-to-twelve digit kind.

And those are the cases now being filed. When David Kessler was running the federal Food and Drug Administration, he had neither the science nor the political authority to ban silicone implants; so he enlisted the trial bar. When then-Governor Lawton Chiles could not persuade the Florida leg-

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islature to raise the tax on tobacco, he persuaded his lawyers. Bill Clinton does not have the votes to take on big tobacco in Congress, so he goes to Janet Reno. The mega-tort lawsuit has become the roving hyena of populist politics.

TO BE sure, a trial, whether in Brooklyn or Birmingham, still provides a systematic, meticulously orchestrated presentation of evidence, under disciplined procedures and rules of order. But for all that, mega-tort cases cannot escape being essentially political.

To begin with, the plaintiffs filing them are political: chief executives of cities, states, or the nation. They choose their tort suits as carefully as they choose their running mates. And that is why guns and tobacco are in real trouble but McDonald's is not. McDonald's does get sued—it was sued not long ago for brewing its coffee too hot to be safely spilled in an elderly customer's lap. But plaintiffs' lawyers are politically too smart to try coffee-scald class actions, and mayors and attorneys general are not lining up to demand Medicare refunds for the burned laps of the elderly. People *like* Big Macs: if calls of this nature were made by national plebiscite, guns and tobacco would be thrown out of office by solid majorities, but Big Macs would be reelected by huge margins. What puts an enterprise in peril in the era of mega-tort may be the same thing that puts it in peril in the conventional political arena—doing something that a good solid majority of people really do not much like—but today, the peril for certain unpopular minorities is far greater in court.

More fundamentally, the mega-tort suits are political because very big suits cannot center on anything but very big issues. When a Marlboro smoker like Patricia Henley sues for her lung cancer, we can reasonably ask such questions as whether tobacco caused her specific cancer, and whether, when she decided to smoke, she understood the risk or was duped. But "consent" does not mean much when Minnesota sues for the state's cost of treating sick smokers. And besides, if accounts really are going to be reckoned on a statewide scale, we would logically have to look at the rest of the ledger, too: the billions Minnesota saved, for example, by not paying pensions to smokers who died off young.

There is no reason to stop there. Guns, for example, sometimes make us more rather than less safe; that is why we arm our police and security guards. Permitting ordinary citizens to carry concealed weapons may have the same effect: one recent study argues that doing so reduces crime, especially violent crime aimed at women and minorities in high-crime urban areas.* And if guns endanger us on the street, they may make us safer in our homes, or at least safer from strangers. As an equal-protection sovereign, Minnesota's real interest is the aggregate safety of *all* its citizens, not just those who end up on the wrong side of the wrong gun.

As for smoking, tobacco lovers may not be able to justify their habit on grounds of self-defense, but many of them can sincerely testify to the pleasure they derive from it.† As Peter L. Berger argued in these pages five years ago ("Furtive Smokers—and What They Tell Us About America," June 1994), anti-smoking zealotry subordinates individual choice and preference to collective wisdom and will, the kind of political choice that in any other context we would associate more with Big Brother than with Uncle Sam. When the zealotry grips Washington, it subordinates state choice to federal dictate.

Even when some facts are quite clear—cigarettes cause lung cancer—it is never clear what follows from this politically, and in particular what change in policy will make things better rather than worse. Like it or not, America today is not a gun-free nation but one in which about 75 million people, about 40 percent of adults, already own collectively more than 200 million guns. It is not a smoke-free nation but one in which 25 percent of our fellow citizens are already hooked. It is also a nation in which things not sold at the 7-11 generally end up being sold in the after-hours club, the crack house, or on the street. Any honest inquiry should consider every way that guns or cigarettes affect not just the pursuit of cancer, mayhem, and misery but also the minority's pursuit of safety and pleasure and the entire balance of power among individuals, states, and the federal government.

One certainly cannot cut through any of these debates with lawyerly logic. It may be obvious, for example, that the manufacture and marketing of guns were "but-for" causes of Steven Fox's injury—but so were the manufacture of steel and the building of Route 95. Such "but-for" analyses rarely reveal much when applied to long causal chains that involve great numbers of people. The springs of human conduct are far too subtle and varied for that.

In short, the big questions are not the kind that

* *More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws* by John R. Lott, Jr. (University of Chicago Press, 1998).

† See *Cigarettes are Sublime* by Richard Klein (Duke University Press, 1993).

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can be resolved by the methodical, apolitical, often scientific inquiry we demand of the judicial process. Indeed, when they *are* brought to court, what people think about the resulting verdicts has nothing to do with the factual particulars. What people think simply tracks the opinion polls on those questions, and has everything to do with politics.

None of this will trouble those already cocksure they know exactly What Must Be Done. But what kind of trial is it in which right-thinking people know what the verdict ought to be before the proceeding even begins? In which a mountain of fact and detail is presented merely as scenery and decoration and in which the little facts do not matter because we are meant to appreciate the gravity of the big facts, to understand society's larger priorities, to be loyal to a higher principle, to be dedicated to a greater cause?

It is a show trial.

IN THE early decades of this century, the Supreme Court invoked "due process" to strike down economic- and public-welfare laws. *Lochner* v. *New York*, decided in 1905, overturned a New York statute limiting the work week of New York bakers. Other rulings of the era permitted the use of unsanitary "shoddy" to stuff mattresses and struck down child-labor laws. If, in *Palsgraf*, Benjamin Cardozo did not think tort law should reach the Long Island Railroad, the Supreme Court did not think the New York legislature could regulate economic life at all.

Yet *Palsgraf* and *Lochner* could not be further apart. At its best, tort law has nothing to do with political currents; it is just the civil way of settling private disputes. *Lochner*, by contrast, threatened a wholesale takeover of political authority by the federal courts, under their unique mandate to interpret the Constitution. "Lochnerism" so infuriated political leaders that at one point Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed to expand the Court's size so that he could pack it with new, anti-*Lochner* appointees. In the event, death and retirement created the room he needed, and the Court duly laid *Lochner* to rest.

With or without FDR, however, it is hard to believe that Lochnerism could have endured. The theory put the federal courts too sharply in conflict with the legislative branch on economic issues that just did not seem to implicate cherished freedoms at the heart of the Bill of Rights. The political pendulum was bound to swing back sooner or later, and it did.

In the decades after the demise of *Lochner*, Congress would delegate a great deal of its authority to executive-branch commissions and agencies. The Supreme Court resisted that transfer for a while, but never with much conviction. So the executive branch grew and grew, and inevitably the question then arose of how to police its most political abuses. The Independent Prosecutor was born. A few conservative curmudgeons—Justice Antonin Scalia most notably among them—protested at the time that we would live to regret this unconstitutional frolic, but people committed to good government paid him no mind. As with *Lochner*, however, a political reaction was bound to come eventually, and it finally did, when a constitutionally defective prosecutor took on a constitutionally elected President.

Now we have the mega-tort suits. Is there reason to expect that the normal political forces will reassert themselves down the line? Legally speaking, it would be easy for a legislature to lower the curtain on the mega-tort—just pass a law, and the thing is done. But politically speaking, legislatures have almost no incentive to do it. These suits are politically vetted from the get-go; they do not go after the majority's will, only the minority's. Therefore, although there is bound to be a political reaction of some kind, one is hard-put to see how it can amount to much.

The gun industry, for example, is now desperately lobbying for state laws to curb suits by cities. Conceivably, candidates could run for state or national office promising to appoint "strict constructionists" of the tort system, and Congress could even enact laws to stop mega-tort suits nationwide. But none of this is likely to happen.

For one thing, if passionate political minorities were in the past able to block legislation aimed at tobacco and guns, the majorities that already favor curbing these industries can certainly block laws aimed at protecting them. And for another thing, there is the role of money—huge money.

Each one of a dozen or more tobacco lawyers will soon collect more money than Bill Clinton has spent on all his political campaigns combined. Inevitably, some healthy share of the take will get channeled back to candidates like Clinton who are committed to expanding the mega-tort still further. A state attorney general eyeing his next campaign for Senator or Governor can give his own political fortunes a boost by bringing home a billion or two from an out-of-state industry, and sharing 30 percent with prominent citizens back home. In states where judges are elected, a chunk of the mega-tort take will inevitably flow to campaigns for the judiciary.

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WE SHOULD not want political controversies to die this way. Political controversy is what keeps a constitutional democracy robust and alive. Yes, legislatures in the past have struck messy, imperfect compromises on guns and tobacco. But to tar those outcomes as a failure of representative government is to reject the political system itself. Our representative democracy is *supposed* to cut messy, unsatisfactory deals on all the irreducibly political questions of a sprawling, heterogeneous society like ours, and cutting such deals does more good than reformists-in-a-hurry think.

A mere fourteen years after we had amended our Constitution to ban alcohol, we amended it again. In 1932, the Democratic party adopted a platform calling for repeal. FDR's new Congress adopted a resolution proposing the 21st Amendment, to repeal the 18th. Ten months later, Utah (of all places) was the 36th state to ratify, and the repeal of Prohibition was achieved. Believe what you will about demon rum or (if you prefer) the cup that cheers: both the 18th Amendment and the 21st were politically healthy things. A national consensus was forged, both coming and going.

Today, by contrast, there is reason to fear that we have started a long, slow spiral into a political black hole. Once the mega-tort gets established in the courts, it will be all but impossible to take it back out. The courts are a political dead end—not surprisingly, since they are not supposed to be political at all. Lochnerism tried to kill the entire political agenda of what would become the New Deal. Happily, it failed. Now, the mega-tort judges are at it again. But this time they are swimming downstream, and they may very well succeed.

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The Seekers

Jon D. Levenson

According to the prophet Malachi, before "the awesome, fearful day of the Lord" arrives, God will send Elijah to "reconcile parents with children and children with their parents." Especially where religious belief is concerned, this messianic act of rapprochement would seem to be as distant as ever. These days, to judge by a recent spate of books, a significant number of adult children are searching for personal meaning in surprising places—above all, in places abandoned or renounced by their parents.

The search itself, involving as it often does the strenuous rediscovery of some very old traditions and some very old-fashioned verities, is profoundly illustrative of our peculiar cultural moment; but what the search yields in individual cases can be something else again. As in every dialectical process, redressing the balance turns out to be much harder than simply tilting it in the opposite direction. To illustrate, let us examine three books, two by "returning" Jews who are in revolt against their uninvolved or estranged parents, the third a dialogue between a Buddhist monk in contest with his French rationalist father.

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Of the three, David Klinghoffer's personal story is the most complex and the most tortured. Currently a senior editor at *National Review* and a practicing Orthodox Jew, Klinghoffer was a Gentile infant when he was adopted in 1965 by a liberal Jewish couple in Southern California. Religiously, he writes in *The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy*,[1] his adoptive parents—"freed of the dogma and superstition my parents' generation associated with traditional Judaism"—left much to be desired. Despite their manifest decency and sense of responsibility, and despite (or rather, as Klinghoffer would have it, because of) their nominal identification with Reform Judaism, they brought up their young son in a "spiritual desert."

How did he escape? As a pre-adolescent, he tells us, "it was my hobby to make cruel fun of everyone I knew." But then he opened an old gift from his grandmother, *To Be a Jew*, by an Orthodox rabbi named Hayim Halevy Donin:

> I remember reading the chapter headed "Laws Relating to Slander, Revenge, and Deceit" as I sat on the edge of my parents' bed, a feeling of horror growing in my stomach with each paragraph, as if by chance I had wandered into a grand-jury room and it was me they were indicting.

Even more troubling were Rabbi Donin's com-

[1] Free Press, 262 pp., $24.00.

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ments under the heading, "Adoption of a Non-Jewish Child." Although David had been circumcised as an infant, now, in reading the requirements of *halakhah* (rabbinic law), he "began to feel I might not be a Jew at all."

Between that moment and his Orthodox conversion lay a series of false starts, moments of forgetfulness, and a general pattern of confusion and ambivalence. When he was eighteen, his mother "formed a relationship with God" during the months she lay dying from a terminal illness. The experience moved him deeply, as did his reading of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, a best-seller by Harold Kushner, a Conservative rabbi. Around the same time, he took a razor blade and his grandfather's prayerbook into the bathroom, performed the token cut required of a previously circumcised convert, and recited the required blessing. He then filled the tub with water and submerged himself as if in a *mikveh* (ritual bath). "I was now a Jew, I thought."

But his self-effectuated Jewishness would not long suffice. Some time afterward, he entered into a romance with a devout Catholic girl in whom he caught a tantalizing glimpse of the spirituality that had eluded him in his Reform upbringing. "David, I think you're confused about your relationship to Judaism," Maria told him, in the understatement of the year; two pages later we find him undergoing a third ritual circumcision and entering a real *mikveh*, this time as a convert to Conservative Judaism. Although he now took steps to remedy his deficit in Hebrew, it was not long before Conservative Judaism, too, struck him as inauthentic.

Looking back today, Klinghoffer sees that "the realization that God has a plan for you, and that you do not know what it is, produces a kind of distress that can manifest itself in any number of ways, including somatic distress." As an undergraduate at Brown, he spent much time at the university health services, seeking treatment for various skin disorders, hypertension, and headaches, and was finally sent for psychotherapy. What he was really suffering from, he writes, was "a definite restlessness of the soul," and once he exhausted the medical route, he found in the Talmud the answer he thought he was looking for: "Occupy yourself with Torah."

But his journey was not over. Bringing his Catholic girlfriend to an Orthodox synagogue—even after his conversion he had kept her in the picture—he found himself dismayed by the din of conversation during the recital of prayers as well as by the "diatribe" the rabbi was delivering against non-Jews. There followed a brief fling with Christian prayer—"I open myself to Jesus. I open myself to Jesus," he quotes himself intoning as he sat on his bed—before deciding to give Orthodox Judaism another chance and undergoing still another ceremony of conversion (and a fourth ritual circumcision).

Orthodox Judaism, or "Torah" Judaism, is the faith he now espouses. Even so, he espouses it with a demurrer. The problem is that

> all Jews who return to Torah Judaism must face the challenge of reconciling themselves to Orthodox culture—to the fact that some Orthodox Jews cling to certain aggravating folkways having nothing to do with Torah. . . . I, sharing neither the culture nor the blood of the tribe, was burdened with an additional dilemma. You can join a culture if you want to. You can't dissolve blood.

Klinghoffer's discovery of the "tribal nature" of Orthodox Judaism was, in fact, one of his biggest disappointments. His sense of differentness, the very condition from which he was seeking relief, was, if anything, aggravated by the experience of entering an Orthodox synagogue and feeling "a hundred pairs of eyes following me to my seat, noting the blondish color of my hair, the un-Jewish line of my nose." That is no doubt why, after becoming an Orthodox Jew but still torn between his two irreconcilable identities, he finally set about reconnecting with his non-Jewish birth mother.

The brief narrative in which he tells this part of his story is the most moving passage in *The Lord Will Gather Me In*. The rapidity with which mother and son forged a bond seemed "*super*natural" to him, "as if my soul had sleeping within it a need to be connected to her soul." This feeling only increased when his mother confided that she had had a Jewish great-grandfather. In the event, she turned out to be wrong—but this brought about a philosophical revelation unto itself. To Klinghoffer, it signaled "the error at the heart of the tribal conception of Jewishness . . . the belief that blood will persevere in the absence of belief."

Judaism, he concludes in his final chapter, "is not about blood." It is "in our minds, our souls, not our bodies." It is, in brief, about Torah, revealed law; and what it requires of its adherents is not Conservative Judaism's judgment that "truth and Torah merely overlap" but the more robust conviction, which Klinghoffer identifies with Orthodoxy, "that Torah *is Truth*." Having at last exchanged tribalism for Torah and Truth, he has resolved the painful ambiguity of the Jew in the Gentile body.

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UNFORTUNATELY, ONE does not reach the end of this spiritual autobiography feeling in the company of a man who has achieved genuine peace of mind. To the contrary, the inner demons that propelled Klinghoffer from Reform to Conservative Judaism and then, after an unanswered invitation to Jesus, into Orthodoxy seem to be at work in his psyche still, long after he has come into possession of the Truth. In particular, the same cocky pre-adolescent whose hobby it was "to make cruel fun of everyone [he] knew" is alive and well in these pages, except that now he has acquired an exceptionally effective writing style and a belief system to convince him that mockery in the service of Truth is not cruel at all.

The objects of that mockery range from Harold Kushner, the rabbi whose book helped Klinghoffer through his mother's death but whose (admittedly defective) theology he here parodies savagely in a chapter entitled "Lord of the Handkerchief," to every form of Judaism other than the one he now espouses. The title of his book comes from the psalmist's confession of faith: "Should my mother and father abandon me, the Lord will gather me in." But Klinghoffer's own life story is itself one of sequential leave-takings, as he serially tries on different forms of Judaism only to reject them in the harshest of terms.

The main object of his ire is Reform. "The Reform movement represented by your local Reform temple," Klinghoffer sweepingly declares, "has its roots in social ambition, in this case among [19th-century] German Jews." That some German Jews advocated a reform of Judaism so that they might assimilate more easily is hardly to be gainsaid. But social ambition has driven Jews in other directions as well, including to Christianity and to secularism. By itself, social ambition explains much too little.

As for the "roots" of Reform Judaism that Klinghoffer does not mention, one was the accurate perception among reformers (and others) that, in the wake of the European emancipation, traditional Jewish practice and institutions would have to adjust if they were to survive. Another lay in Kantian philosophy, with its focus on ethics and its dislike of moral systems based solely on obedience to commandments. This philosophical orientation, idealistic in both the technical and general senses, is quite the opposite of social ambition, and has long made its presence felt in modern Orthodoxy as well. Out of these roots—and there were others—grew a movement that sought to show how Judaism could be not only acceptable to modern man but preferable to both the religious and the secular alternatives on offer.

To acknowledge these complex historical circumstances need not necessarily imply that Reform Judaism today is a legitimate form of faithfulness to Torah, or even that it is an effective antidote to the powerful forces of assimilation in American culture. But Klinghoffer's version of Jewish history reduces it to a crude morality play in which professing traditionalists are always good (except for their mysterious tendency to "cling to certain aggravating folkways"), while professing innovators are shallow and without honorable motivation—in a word, impostors. Is it impertinent to recall in this connection that the man who now considers God's Truth so transparent that only fools can miss it is the same man who only yesterday, as it were, was sitting on his bed repeating the words, "I open myself to Jesus"?

The character of Klinghoffer's present Truth remains, moreover, murky. To say that "Torah *is Truth*" is to raise a question very much on the minds of the founders of every modern Jewish movement, Orthodoxy emphatically included: what is the relationship of revealed law to other sources of knowledge, and especially to the knowledge that derives from such distinctly modern disciplines as linguistics, archeology, epigraphy, and the history of religion?

Writing about the authority of the "oral"—i.e., rabbinic—law, Klinghoffer asserts the traditional notion that it derives, like the written law of the Bible, from Sinai itself: "It seems unlikely that God would reveal a largely inscrutable string of words [i.e., the written Torah] and expect the Jews to order their lives according to it" without having vouchsafed, as well, the amplifications of subsequent commentary. But in its original, ancient Near Eastern context, the biblical text may not have been inscrutable at all, only becoming so to some degree as the centuries passed and cultural and linguistic contexts shifted. How do we proceed now that historical research, powerfully energized by archeological discoveries, has enabled us to recover many of the original contexts and has thus inevitably raised challenges to longstanding rabbinic interpretations?

As it happens, rabbinic literature itself occasionally shows an awareness of its own innovativeness. In the Middle Ages, moreover, Jewish biblical scholars vigorously pursued a "plain sense" of Scripture that could—without undercutting *halakhah*—diverge widely from the sense dominant in rabbinic commentary, even on matters of law. All this is lost upon Klinghoffer. Arriving at Ortho-

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doxy with a ravenous appetite for authenticity and spiritual intensity but virtually unacquainted with Jewish sources, he leaves us with a dumbed-down theology that is encapsulated in his own bumper-sticker formulation, "No Oral Torah? No God." This is not only unfair to Reform and Conservative Judaism, which he wants us to dismiss, but inadequate to the pre-modern Jewish tradition he thinks he is upholding. In this, for all his conservative (small-c) convictions, religious and otherwise, his enterprise recalls nothing so much as the forced attempts to concoct a "usable past" that we see today on the part of Afrocentrists and radical feminists.

Those strictures apply with special force to Klinghoffer's concept of Jewish tribalism—a concept he rejects in favor of his own conclusion that "Judaism is not about blood . . . [I]t is in our minds, our souls, not our bodies." In fact, the classical Jewish tradition refuses to dichotomize blood and mind, or body and soul.

The people Israel is indeed a tribe, a natural family. Were things otherwise, no one could ever be born a Jew, and descent would be of no account in determining Jewish identity; rather than a people, the Jews would then be a church, a voluntary association of individuals united by their common beliefs. Instead, in the classical vision, the Jews are both a tribe into which one can be born and a religious community united by belief and practice; to borrow a phrase from the late Arthur A. Cohen, they are both a natural and a supernatural people.

Tribes, as a rule, do not accept converts; religious communities do not accept nonbelievers and nonpractitioners. It is pungently ironic that Klinghoffer should wish to make the Jews less a natural family and more a church, for in this he resembles no one so much as the founders of Reform Judaism, the very people he most despises. But the miracle of conversion to Judaism is that the *ethnicity* of the convert changes, not just his beliefs and practices. Jewish blood does now flow through David Klinghoffer's veins, just as it flows through the veins of the born Jews—Reform, Conservative, secular, or whatever—with whom he feels so little kinship.

As it happens, a corrective to David Klinghoffer's misreading of Jewish identity is at hand in a new book by a fellow-returnee to Judaism, Stephen Dubner. As its subtitle indicates, *Turbulent Souls: A Catholic Son's Return to His Jewish Family*[2] is, indeed, very much a story of family—which is not to say that it is without problems of its own.

Dubner, who now works as an editor at the *New York Times Magazine*, was raised as a Catholic by exceptionally devout parents, both of whom happened to be Jewish by birth but each of whom had abandoned the Jewish tradition before marriage. In the case of his mother, Florence, that tradition had never formed a vibrant presence in her life. The attitude in the home in which she grew up corresponded to that of the Reform Jews David Klinghoffer describes from his childhood. All that remained was a residual Jewishness: Florence's mother "was not religious at all, yet she would not even pronounce the word 'Jesus'—'That Man,' [she] would say, if she had to say anything at all."

The absence of an explicit belief system deprived young Florence Greenglass of the resources for addressing the great existential questions that frequently torment young adults. Under the influence of her ballet teacher, she began to explore Christianity and in time converted to Catholicism. Although this reduced her mother to "an incoherent fury of barbs and threats and shrieks," her father was more understanding. "I wish I *could* believe, he said tenderly, laying his hand on hers." Evidently he knew whereof he spoke: at least some members of his family *could* still believe, even if not in Judaism. A cousin, Ethel Greenglass, had traveled the route of belief all the way to Communism, and together with her husband Julius Rosenberg would one day be executed for handing atomic secrets over to the Soviets.

On Dubner's father's side, the story was rather different. Sol (known in childhood as Solly or by his Yiddish name Shloime, and as an adult by his Catholic name Paul) had grown up in a rigidly Orthodox home. "You could not find a more honest Jew than Shepsel Dubner," the author writes of the grandfather he never knew, "but he lived in constant fear that God was peeking into his mind or his dinner bowl, and he wouldn't deign to as much as share a meal with a Jew who was less vigilant." If Shepsel's experience of the God of Israel and His commandments really was as negative as this (his grandson's informants are not exactly unbiased), we should perhaps not be surprised that every last one of his children abandoned his way of life, leaving him to wonder, plaintively, "what sins [he] had committed to make his sons run from the Torah."

Contrary to David Klinghoffer's belief that Orthodoxy has been uniquely able to hold on to its children, the case of Shepsel Dubner reminds us of the massive losses Orthodoxy itself has undergone in the modern world. Stephen's father Sol, for one, ran not only from Torah but eventually—so great

[2] Morrow, 320 pp., $24.00.

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was his own need for meaning—into the welcoming arms of the Catholic Church, accepting baptism as a soldier in Hawaii during World War II. Eventually he met Florence Greenglass at a church function, and after they married, they built their family life around their shared Catholic faith. While "other children . . . were discovering the joys of television, the young Dubners"—Stephen is one of eight—"were kneeling on the living-room floor to recite the Rosary and to pray for the conversion of Russia."

Somehow, though, Catholicism did not hold the appeal for young Stephen that it did for his parents. Taking communion, he writes, "I longed . . . to understand how my parents felt when they spoke of being filled by God. . . . But Sunday after Sunday it wouldn't happen for me." After his father's death, Stephen, only ten at the time, was hardly consoled by the assurances of his parents' friends that it was an honor to be the child of a man God wanted so badly. By the time he went away to college, Dubner's Catholicism had become inert.

In the meantime, signs that he was still somehow a Jew kept presenting themselves, at first to his amazement and then to his delight. When he went South to study, his mother, who had not withheld from him the knowledge of his Jewish ancestry, warned him that people "might run their hands through my black curly hair . . . feeling for the nubs of Satan's horns." But, visiting a Jewish friend's family, Dubner was surprised to see how welcome he found their expressed conviction that "Once a Jew, always a Jew." "I usually feel uncomfortable with strangers," he writes, "even with my own brothers and sisters, but [my friend] Irving and his family relaxed me." Meeting Irving's mother, a woman of his own mother's age, he fell in love: "It was as if I were a piece of her somehow, or as if within her dwelled a piece of me that I had been searching for."

The language is strikingly reminiscent of Klinghoffer's report of his own reunion with his Gentile birth mother: "It was as if my soul had sleeping within it a need to be connected to her soul." For Dubner, however, the felt bond was one neither of immediate relationship nor of belief, but rather of peoplehood, of "tribalism," as Klinghoffer might put it. Irving's mother was a surrogate for the Jewish mother Dubner had never had.

To his further surprise, it turned out that he did not need a surrogate mother in order to be accepted as a full Jew by other Jews. As a friend in New York reported back, his own mother would suffice: "according to *halakhah*, you're a Jew, even though your mother converted." Dubner wondered:

> What did this mean? How could a religion be transmitted through the blood? By what right, by what bizarre law, had these rabbis declared me one of theirs?

The answer was not long in coming. Like Klinghoffer, Dubner went into journalism. Through an article he was doing on how to save New York City, he established contact with a close associate of the Lubavitcher rebbe. Soon he was collaborating on a collection of the rebbe's teachings and discovering that they "began to penetrate me. I began to do what the book counseled." Despite his mother's predictable (and rather gentle) opposition—"To me Catholicism is the blossoming or fruition or completion of Judaism"—Dubner excitedly went about reconnecting with his Jewish family, even traveling to Poland in search of ancestral records, reconstructing the process by which his parents adopted Catholicism, and visiting Israel ("the trip felt oddly like a homecoming").

No less predictably, the deeper his rooting in Judaism, the more troubled became his relationship with his mother. Unlike Klinghoffer, however, who disdains the religious affiliation of his adoptive parents, Dubner was eager to find a way to avoid offending his mother and the faith that had long stood at the center of her life. How to do this? A journalistic connection led to an audacious plan to "ask the Cardinal of the Archdiocese of New York to referee my family dispute." This, John Cardinal O'Connor graciously did—by citing "the recent declarations of Pope John Paul II about the validity of Judaism" and "the clearly articulated teaching of the Second Vatican Council about the primacy of an *informed* conscience."

And so Stephen Dubner's story ends happily, with Catholic mother and Jewish son personally reconciled though still religiously apart. Before eating, Veronica Dubner (to use the name she took upon becoming a Catholic) makes the sign of the cross, recites the traditional Hebrew blessing over bread, and she and her Jewish son both respond, "Amen."

WHAT LED Stephen Dubner to abandon the intense Catholicism of his parents and to embrace in its stead the Jewish identity they had left behind? Part of the answer would seem to lie in the peculiar character of their Catholicism on the one hand and, on the other, the peculiar character of his newfound Judaism.

The God of his Catholic youth, he tells us, "was finite, rigid, distant," a God who "valued good deeds" but who also "controlled every deed, good

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and bad." In contrast, Irving and his family, the Jews he met on his college trip, "relaxed" him. Here he reveals more than he perhaps intends. After all, a warm ethnicity and a welcoming family feeling are hardly uncommon among Catholics, and rigid judgmentalism and compulsiveness of religious practice have occasionally been spotted among observant Jews—see, for example, Shepsel Dubner.

As, indeed, his grandson Stephen describes it, the rigidity of Shepsel's Orthodoxy strikingly resembles the rigidity of Stephen's own parents' brand of Catholicism. This suggests that however much the Church became, for them, a kind of substitute for the families they had left behind, it could not provide for their own children the warmth and love of a natural family. And if that is so, clearly the impulse that led Stephen Dubner to reconnect with the Jews was born not only of dissatisfaction with the Catholic God but of a felt need for a people, not just a church. Klinghoffer's stumbling block was Dubner's salvation.

What he has made of that salvation—what kind of a Jew he is or will become—is, however, another question. Though, having grown up a deracinated Catholic, he emphasizes here his recovery of peoplehood, his identity as a Jew is, he assures us, a matter of more than ethnicity alone. The Lubavitcher rebbe's teachings left their mark; soon after encountering them, he found himself "spending my last waking moments each night considering what I'd done that day, and why; breathing a thank-you to God every morning for the new day," and the like. In addition, he reports, "I tried, though this was most difficult, to listen to what my soul had to say."

This is all well and good—if perhaps to be expected in an age in which religion is often confused with pop psychology. The problem is that Hasidism, of the Lubavitcher variety or any other, instructs its followers to listen to more than what their own souls have to say. It also insists that they listen to, and follow, what the classic codes of *halakhah* have to say, all the way down to the most inconvenient details. Without approving of the rigidity of Dubner's grandfather, the Lubavitcher rebbe, too, might have counseled an observant Jew not to "as much as share a meal with a Jew who was less vigilant" if the latter prepared the food.

The effort to appropriate selected aspects of the spirituality of Hasidism while ignoring or jettisoning its concepts of observance and authority has become characteristic of certain forms of non-Orthodox Judaism. Whether Dubner has cast his lot with this perspective is unclear. On theological issues, his book suffers from a frustrating vagueness, and as a result the story he tells can seem merely idiosyncratic, providing little guidance to a reader curious about the distinctive truth he has found in Judaism and the practices that, whatever one's personal story or personal preferences, necessarily come with it. In this sense, and just to complete the circle, Klinghoffer's salvation may be Dubner's stumbling block.

As STRANGE as are the existential and theological turns taken by David Klinghoffer and Stephen Dubner, no less strange is the story of Matthieu Ricard, a French scientist who is the son of the distinguished secular philosopher and political commentator Jean-François Revel. Repudiating both his former life and his father's worldview at once, the son is now a follower of Tibetan Buddhism. Strange—and yet, in the particular context of the spiritual "return" of our times, familiar enough.

To begin with the father: Jean-François Revel, who is now seventy-five, was raised in a nominally Catholic family, studied literature and philosophy, and, after teaching for several years, became a professional writer and newspaper editor. As a philosopher, he has been especially interested in the growth of scientific knowledge. His best-known work, *Without Marx or Jesus* (1971), was a vigorous defense of American democratic capitalism against its mostly leftist French despisers, and he is also the author of such influential works of the late-cold-war period as *The Totalitarian Temptation* (1977) and *How Democracies Perish* (an early excerpt from which appeared in the June 1984 COMMENTARY).

Then there is the son: Matthieu Ricard was born in 1946 and earned a doctorate in molecular biology under the direction of François Jacob, a Nobel-prize winner. But at some point, his father reports, he "suddenly . . . announced to his boss and myself—to our great consternation—that he had decided to abandon scientific research, go to live in Asia, and follow the teachings of Tibetan Buddhist lamas." Today he is a monk, living in Nepal and working as a translator of Tibetan sacred literature.

In May 1996, Revel reports, these two learned men held a discussion "high up on a mountainside above Kathmandu." What emerged was *The Monk and the Philosopher: A Father and Son Discuss the Meaning of Life*, a best-seller in France and now available here.[3] It is, in essence, an exposition of Tibetan Buddhism (other forms of Buddhism being mentioned only in passing), and a defense of it against common Western misperceptions.

[3] Translated by John Canti, foreword by Jack Miles. Schocken, 310 pp., $24.00.

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The exposition itself is standard-issue. "Suffering," Matthieu Ricard tells us, "is the result of ignorance," and ignorance, "in essence, is [the fallacious] belief in a truly existing self and in the solidity of phenomena." From this starting point, father and son delve into the affinities and contrasts between Buddhism and Western metaphysics, science, and psychoanalysis, in the process illuminating not only Buddhism but the whole course of Western thought from the pre-Socratics to our own time.

Against his son's convictions, Revel propounds a belief in the *reality* of the self, defending the vast efforts the West has made through "political, economic, artistic, and cognitive action" for the sake of enhancing the "value of the self." But Ricard, the ex-scientist turned contemplative, dismisses those advances: "Western efficiency," he holds, is nothing but "a major contribution to minor needs," and material progress nothing but "a sort of façade" that in the absence of spiritual values "masks the pointlessness of life."

There may be less in these distinctions than meets the eye. Eager to dispel his father's misimpression (if such it be) of Buddhism as passive and fatalistic, Ricard concedes that "Even if the self is only an imposture, . . . it's perfectly legitimate to remedy suffering by all available means and to do whatever can be done to increase the well-being of all." Apparently, those "minor needs" addressed by Western efficiency are not so minor after all. For his part, Revel laments that "in our scientific age, philosophers have abandoned the ideal of wisdom, in which the philosopher would provide his readers or listeners with recipes to help them attain such wisdom." Apparently, the contribution of Western efficiency is not so "major" after all.

Ricard, however, is not content to relegate Buddhism to the status of just another recipe for the attainment of wisdom. He, too, is a Truth-seeker. Despite his insistence that Buddhism is a nontheistic system of thought, he is convinced that Buddhist lamas have supernatural qualities. They are, he tells us, able to read minds ("They might be having this kind of experience all the time, but they only very rarely let anyone know"), and benefit from other kinds of clairvoyance as well, derived in some cases from memories preserved from previous incarnations. As for ordinary Buddhist believers, they too partake of the miraculous. Even such pious practices as prayer-wheels, which Revel considers merely superstitious, Ricard seeks to defend as manifestations of a lofty philosophy. "Perhaps not all Tibetans know the doctrine," he admits, "but I don't think they turn prayer-wheels in the hope of achieving their ordinary wishes for prosperity or success. They have in mind the notion of accumulating merit, . . . purifying the stream of their consciousness."

RICARD MAKES a good case for his adopted tradition. But it is also plain that a process of massive idealization is at work in these patient disquisitions to his gentle and respectful father—a man whose own learning, unfortunately, does not seem to extend into the history of religion, Western or Eastern. Indeed, however much the son has liberated himself from a belief in "the solidity of phenomena," he himself remains an example of one very solid phenomenon that has been discussed recently by the distinguished Buddhologist Donald S. Lopez, Jr. in his book, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*.[4] These are Westerners who

> describe Tibet as everything that the materialist West wants. . . . It is Tibet that will regenerate the West by showing us, prophetically, what we can be by showing us what it had been. . . . Tibet is seen as the cure for an ever-dissolving Western civilization, restoring its spirit.

The Western romanticization of Tibet has been going on for over a century, recently gathering momentum because of the savagery of the Communist Chinese suppression of Tibetan culture and religion. What is missing in Matthieu Ricard's thoroughgoing apologetic is an awareness that, as Lopez puts it, "traditional Tibet, like any complex society, had great inequalities, with power monopolized by an elite composed of a small aristocracy, the hierarchs of various sects (including incarnate lamas)," and marked by the subordination of "nonaristocratic laymen, non-Buddhists, and women."

Ricard is silent not only on such social facts but on discord within Tibetan Buddhism itself. This is all the more remarkable given his association with the Dalai Lama, for whom he serves as French interpreter. For example, he does not deal with the Dalai Lama's efforts to counteract the ritual of propitiating the wrathful deity Shugden by means of "offerings of fire from a lamp made of human fat and a wick made of human hair." Controversy over this practice had been raging for twenty years by the time Ricard and Revel held their mountaintop dialogue in 1996. Not long afterward, according to Lopez, one of the Dalai Lama's supporters in the anti-Shugden campaign, a seventy-year-old scholar, "was stabbed to death along with two of his stu-

[4] University of Chicago Press, 283 pp., $25.00.

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dents, . . . apparently by Tibetan supporters of Shugden." This is not the sort of thing that should be happening in Shangri-La, and it is certainly not the sort of thing that is allowed to mar Ricard's portrait of the compassionate and enlightened practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, from whom the violent, materialistic, and intolerant West has so much to learn.

Ricard's tendency to sentimentalize his adopted religion is, of course, nothing unusual among converts. More disturbing is that his father, a tough-minded political realist and a courageous critic of utopianisms of various sorts, offers so little resistance and presses him so weakly. The reasons can be surmised from Revel's conclusion to their dialogue. For one thing, the father writes, the territory of Western philosophy, once upon a time "not just one discipline among others" but an activity that effected "an integral metamorphosis in one's way of living," has now been abandoned, "left without an heir." It is this "vacant ground," he continues, "that Buddhism now occupies, all the more easily in the absence of any local competition." For another thing, "the collapse of the great political utopias that were our century's disastrous experience" have turned more and more people "back to the quest for personal wisdom," and specifically to Buddhism, with its teachings of tolerance.

What is extraordinary here is the dichotomy that Revel unself-critically posits: either philosophy (as a way of life) or Buddhism (as a source of personal wisdom). Almost completely missing is any awareness that the West has its own religious traditions—traditions, moreover, that are skeptical of political utopias, critical of materialism, rich in meditative practices, and, at their best, tolerant and respectful of the informed conscience (to revert to Cardinal O'Connor's term). "The Pope, perhaps, still has a large audience," Revel concedes, but "people no longer go to Mass and no longer feel like applying the Christian precepts." This does seem to be the case in Europe (though even there things may be changing). But elsewhere? Has the revitalization of Christianity in the U.S., and of traditional Judaism, too, altogether passed this veteran America-watcher by? Besides, how many people are interested in the vigorous asceticism of the Dalai Lama, or even in seriously accepting Buddhism as their way of life?

One cannot help wondering, in short, whether young Matthieu Ricard would have gone East for spiritual guidance if his parents had not long earlier given up on the Christianity in which they were raised. To put it another way, one cannot help wondering about the degree to which the "personal wisdom" of Jean-François Revel, with its admirable concern for realism, moderation, and social betterment—for a life "without Marx or Jesus"—may have itself helped turn his son's hungry eyes elsewhere.

Toward the end of their conversation, the son asks his father the ultimate personal question:

> We've spoken a lot of Buddhism as a way of giving meaning to life. But what is it that gives meaning to life for you, and for the trend of thinking that you represent?

In reply, Revel speaks evasively, as if caught off-guard:

> First of all, I don't represent any trend of thinking. I do my best to understand the systems that exist or have existed in the past, and that's already hard enough.

He then goes on to sketch briefly "the diverse directions that Western thought has taken" in religion and philosophy, again without stating a personal commitment.

Reading this reply, one recalls David Klinghoffer's remark about his Reform Jewish parents, who could not "give any convincing rationale for the strictures they obeyed." And one thinks also of Stephen Dubner's maternal grandmother, who could neither practice Judaism, nor pronounce the name of Jesus, nor, for that matter, espouse Communism, the substitute faith of her Rosenberg relatives. One can indeed live one's life without Marx or Jesus, but eventually something will fill the vacuum. Eventually a generation of children will arise and ask their parents, "What is it that gives meaning to life for you?"

Blessed are the parents who have, in word and in deed, an answer to this question.[5] Blessed are the children who hearken.

[5] One such parent is the respected Catholic theologian and neoconservative political thinker Michael Novak. In *Tell Me Why* (Pocket Books, 321 pp., $24.00), Novak undertakes to answer questions about Catholicism posed by his skeptical daughter Jana, a writer and editor in her twenties. Though the questions seem staged and even pedestrian, the answers, delivered in an informal style, constitute a helpful, learned, and at times moving elucidation of Roman Catholic faith. (One misses, however, any serious engagement with the formidable historical-critical challenge to Catholic teaching that has grown up in modern times.) In the end, Jana Novak still has not recommitted herself to Catholicism, but one has the sense that, alone among the members of the younger generation in the books under consideration, she is likely to end up in religious harmony with her parents.

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He Flew Through the Air

Joseph Epstein

Forget it. It'll be close at the end, and then with about twenty seconds left, Michael will have the ball and he'll keep his eye on the clock, and then with a few seconds left he'll go for a jumper and hit it. The Bulls will win, and the legend will live. It's who he is, and it's what he does.

—Chuck Daly, *NBA coach*

When I was thirteen, my father allowed me to put up a wooden backboard and basket in our backyard in Chicago. The yard was small, mostly grass, the only concrete being a narrow sidewalk leading to the alleyway. I used that basket in all seasons, including insultingly cold Chicago winters when I would daily shoot a hundred free throws with my gloves on. At other times, I would play fantasy games. Since I have always been of the realist school, in personal life as in literature, I would limit my scoring to anywhere between 24 and 33 points a game, usually winning for my team by popping in two free throws after the clock had run out. Not in my sweetest fantasies could I ever imagine myself doing what Michael Jordan, the recently retired star of the Chicago Bulls, would do in actuality some 40 years later. If I was a realist even when grounded in fantasy, he, Michael Jordan, was a magic realist, soaring in life.

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In *Playing for Keeps*,* his book about Michael Jordan, David Halberstam uses the phrase "Jordanologist" to describe close students of the great player, marketing phenomenon, and international celebrity. Only now do I realize that, since 1984, when he left the university of North Carolina after his junior year to play with the Bulls, Jordanology has been, as the professors say, my subspecialty. Over this period of time I must have seen Michael—as we in Chicago refer to him—play perhaps a thousand games; even though I watched most of them on television, I feel that I know his facial expressions, his moods, his verbal responses at least as well as I do those of most members of my own family. When I acquired cable TV, I did so not chiefly but exclusively in order to see more of Michael before he closed out his career. The prospect of seeing him at night could lift my spirits during the day; actually watching him play—even through the cool medium of the screen—brought me the kind of ephemeral but never-to-be-gainsaid pleasure of a fine meal or a lightish aesthetic experience.

Maybe not so lightish as all that. Having had the chance to observe so much of Michael Jordan in performance may be the equivalent, in sports, of having had tickets to the early years of George Balanchine's New York City Ballet. If this reference to Balanchine seems too elevated, the law of carefully measured accolades has long ago run out on

* Random House, 426 pp., $24.95.

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Michael Jordan. By now he has been compared with nearly every genius the world has produced, with the possible exceptions of Goethe and Proust. In many quarters, he has become the standard by which genius in *other* fields is measured. "Frank Galati," I heard a former president of Northwestern University say about a theatrical director who happens to teach there, "is the Michael Jordan of the contemporary theater."

When Michael retired, Jerry Sloan, coach of the Utah Jazz, whom the Bulls twice defeated in the NBA finals on their way to winning six championships in eight years, said that he should be remembered "as the greatest player who ever played the game." Sidney Green, a journeyman player and briefly a teammate, asserted that Jordan "was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God." Jayson Williams, the power forward for the New Jersey Nets, called him "Jesus in Nikes." Bobby Knight, the coach of Indiana University, once remarked that we would not see his equal in our lifetimes and neither would our children or our grandchildren in theirs. Later he pushed things up a notch by stating that Michael Jordan was the greatest player of all time, not just of basketball but of any sport. My own view is that in Michael we had the reincarnation of Achilles, but without the sulking and without the heel.

Chicago has not been notable for its winning teams—the Cubs, the stale joke has it, are now going into the 93rd year of their rebuilding program. But we have had a splendid run of gentleman black athletes, beginning with Ernie Banks and moving chronologically through Gale Sayers, Walter Payton, André Dawson, and Michael Jordan, with Sammy Sosa being the current entry. These are men who, like a much earlier generation of black jazz musicians, have brought a high degree of quality to their craft and much dignity to their personal bearing. Alas, with the exception of Michael, all have had to settle for playing on losing teams, while Michael, by contrast, after a few early years in the NBA desert without capable teammates, triumphed with an astonishing completeness.

In part because I grew up in Chicago, in part because of the mysteries of temperament, I identify in sports almost exclusively with the losers. The poor guy who misses a crucial field goal that costs his team the Superbowl, the pitcher who allows a game-winning home run late in the World Series, the nineteen-year-old kid who blows two free throws and knocks his team out of the Final Four—these are the athletes whose long, melancholy off-seasons I ponder, not those who, champagne dripping from their hair, announce they are off to Disney World. Having an athlete like Michael in my life, an athlete who is so clearly a winner, has been a switch, and of a radical sort. Yet in retrospect even Michael's winning has seemed of the dramatic sort, that is, winning against the odds, coming from behind, pulling it out of the fire—which was, of course, his specialty.

I am a Jordanologist of sufficiently long standing to have seen Michael actually *not* come through, even to see him blow a few games with poor passes or by having the ball stolen from him. But the more lasting impression is of the surging Michael, the Michael who could put together a dazzling 24-point fourth quarter before a television audience of twenty million. Even in 1995-96, when the Bulls won 72 of 81 regular-season games, more than any other team in the history of the National Basketball Association, it seemed—whether true or not—that the vast majority were won by coming from behind, as often as not with Michael scoring at the buzzer.

In this as in many other respects, Michael Jordan was very much a basketball player of the modern era. As a fan, I myself go back to the game in its medieval phase, being old enough to remember when Jews were still a strong presence. I recall the elegant Dolph Schayes, of the Syracuse Nats; and Nat Holman and, later, Red Holzman, two of the great names in coaching; and Abe Saperstein, the founder and original owner of the Harlem Globetrotters. In the Chicago Public League of my youth, there were coaches named Bosco Levine and Sid Novak, and many of the All-City players had names like Irv Bemoras, Harvey Babetch, and Eddie Goldman. One of the great annual sports events in the city was the game between the Catholic Youth Organization and the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization.

The best athlete in my own neighborhood, Ronnie Rubenstein, a kid two years younger than I, was good enough to start at Louisville, then as now a big-time basketball school; in Louisville, local Jewish businessmen would take the Rube to their tailors for bespoke sport jackets. Sports-minded Jews of my generation and slightly older had a special love for basketball, which may perhaps explain why so many NBA franchises today have Jewish owners. A man named Jerry Reinsdorf is the principal owner and managing director of the Chicago Bulls, and David Stern, the commissioner of the NBA, grew up basketball-crazy in New York.

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As for the game itself, when I first came to it the great offensive weapon was the two-handed set shot, and free throws, more often than not, were still made underhand. The set shot elided into the one-hander, the one-hander into the jump shot. The slam dunk would come later—specifically, with the extraordinary and sudden advent of excellent coordination in large men, which seemed to have happened, quite mysteriously, in the late 1950's.

But the really dramatic change occurred with the integration of black players into big-time college programs and the NBA. As late as the 1950's, Harry Coombs, coach at the University of Illinois, and Branch McCracken, coach at Indiana, did not trouble to recruit blacks; and Adolph Rupp, at the University of Kentucky, was said to have no compunction about expressing his own racist sentiments. The first black in the NBA was Nat (Sweetwater) Clifton, a former Globetrotter. As everyone knows, basketball turned out to be a game at which blacks excelled and soon came to dominate. A black comedian, when asked why, replied, "It's our golf."

The game has been further jazzed up in recent years by such innovations as the outlawing of the zone defense, the installation in 1954 of the 24-second clock, and the three-point shot. The NBA has also lost the scruffiness that old-line fans like me used to love. I recall seeing a player named Togo Palazzi play a game, on national television, wearing shorts of the wrong color, which suggests not only that he was a careless packer but that NBA teams in the 1950's operated on a very slim budget. Between then and now, the really huge difference has been made by money. Today the median annual NBA salary for players is more than $1 million and the minimum salary is $287,500. In his last season, Michael Jordan's salary was $36 million, and he is said to have earned another $40 million or so through endorsements—for McDonald's, Gatorade, Hanes underwear, Nike, etc.—as well as from royalties and personal contracts.

PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL has run in waves of success and failure, athletic and commercial. When I first began to watch, the Boston Celtics, with players such as Bob Cousy and Bill Sharman and then later Bill Russell and John Havlicek, were indomitable, magnificent to watch, and downright irritating in their refusal to lose championships. A new phase set in with the sleek New York Knicks of Willis Reed, Earl Monroe, Walt Frazier, Bill Bradley & Co. and the Los Angeles Lakers of Jerry West, Elgin Baylor, and Wilt Chamberlain. But then the play dipped badly. I recall going to a Bulls-Knicks game at some point in the mid-1970's with Jerome Holtzman, the sports columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*. "They need four or five more balls out there," he remarked as we watched the two teams pound drearily up and down the floor. "One ball isn't enough for these selfish creeps."

Things picked up again with the entrance into the NBA of Larry Bird of the Celtics and Magic Johnson of the Lakers, two players who revitalized the game. Others worthy of a connoisseur's interest—Pete Maravich, Julius Erving, Isiah Thomas, Paul Westphal—came on the scene. Michael Jordan arrived toward the close of Bird and Johnson's careers, and he clearly represented something new. He took things to a higher level, and brought an excitement of a kind the game had never quite known before.

Power in the NBA is demonstrated in a number of ways. But only a very small number of stars have had the authority, in effect, to appoint their own coaches. In practice, this has meant the power to fire any coach who does not run the team the way the star wishes. Magic Johnson, for example, was able to have Paul Westhead canned because his run-and-gun offense was not Magic Johnson's kind of offense. Larry Bird might have been able to do the same, though under the strong management of Red Auerbach it is unlikely he would have tried.

But Michael Jordan outdid them all: he was able not only to insist on the retention of Phil Jackson, the Bulls' coach during their championship seasons, but to elevate Jackson into serious money—roughly $7 million—during Michael's and Jackson's final year. The alternative was watching Michael retire early or otherwise take his golden-egg-making apparatus away with him, and there could be no mistaking the goldenness of those eggs: David Halberstam reports that, in 1993, with Michael playing, the NBA finals for the first time achieved higher television ratings than the World Series—and when he was not playing the audience dropped by eight million viewers, or roughly a third. In June 1998, *Fortune* estimated the reverberating effect of Michael on the national economy, including tickets, merchandising, television revenues, endorsements, and the rest, at "just about $10 billion—and still counting."

AS FOR what gave Michael Jordan all that allure, commercial clout, and bargaining power, it was, to begin with, his performance on the court. He was a natural—with preternatural strength and speed, huge hands, astonishing leaping ability, amazing stamina. Adding to Michael's leaping abil-

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ity was his capacity to maintain himself in the air; "hang time" is the term of art here, and at moments—when leaving from the free-throw line for a slam, say—he did seem as if attached to an invisible hang-glider. When Hersey Hawkins, another player, asked him how he executed a certain shot, Michael replied: "When you get up, you hang for three seconds and let the defender fly by and then you release it."

If Michael was a natural, he was a natural who worked hard to improve his game, and who possessed, along with great court savvy, an indomitable, a really quite fanatical, will to win. He began as a slashing, driving player, able to elude defenses and then arrange to score in some inventive way. Later in his career he developed one of the game's great jump shots, which he released high in the air and fading away—a thing of beauty and a joy, if not forever then till the next time he did it. In *The Jordan Rules*,* a more critical book than Halberstam's, the journalist Sam Smith records Phil Jackson's continual amazement at Michael's ability to score pretty much at will against even the best players in the world: "It was a curse in some ways to be a comet racing across the game with everyone light-years in your wake."

On the court, finally, Michael was the complete player—as brilliant on defense as on offense. Led by Michael and two teammates, Scottie Pippen and Ron Harper, the Bulls had what was known as the Doberman defense. That is exactly what it must have felt like to play against these guys—as if one were being pursued by a pack of lean, mean Doberman pinschers.

David Halberstam argues that the great NBA players over the past twenty years have not only had a will to win but have been able directly to transfuse this will into their teammates. Not *all* the great players have been able to accomplish this: Julius Erving, one of the most elegant offensive players in the history of the game, could light a fire only under himself; Kareem Abdul Jabbar, one of the most consistently efficient players, could not lead; Wilt Chamberlain, one of the strongest athletes in any sport, was so lacking in this capacity that it seemed a team could not hope to win *with* him (though the Philadelphia 76'ers did, once, in 1963). But three players who did have it—and of whom Halberstam provides lengthy accounts—were Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Isiah Thomas.

Did Michael? He certainly had the will to win, and to the highest power. But sometimes this worked to the detriment of the team itself. He practiced so hard that he often tended to wear his teammates out. He was a specialist at baiting other players on his own team. If he did not think a newly arrived player fit, he would stay on the guy's back until he either remade himself to Michael's specifications, asked to be traded, or simply disappeared from the league. He had a nice taste for vengeance, never forgetting either a slight or an injury.

Basketball began as a non-contact sport, but it has not been one for decades. So violent can the rebounding become that the area around the basket is known among the players as the alligator-wrestling pit. Everyone in the NBA now does weight training. Superior coordination and endurance and style are important, but, at the highest level, without the muscle to back it up they do not come to much. The Detroit Pistons, who dominated the league before the Bulls, did it on sheer physical intimidation; the New York Knicks, under the coaching of Pat Riley, attempted the same thing, though without comparable success.

When Michael Jordan first came into the league it was understood that his then-teammate Charles Oakley was his bodyguard. Anyone roughed up Michael, Oakley would find a way to repay him later in the game. It is dangerous out on an NBA floor, where one's masculinity is regularly tested. Michael himself eventually muscled up. He came in at 6'6" and 185 pounds; he ended his career 30 pounds heavier—all of it muscle, carefully acquired with the help of a personal trainer so that the added weight would not slow him down.

But the largest problem that Michael presented, especially to his own team, derived not from his weight or his manners but from his extraordinary ability, with which he dominated every game. One of his teammates, a now-forgotten center named Dave Corzine, complained that when the team won it seemed it was Michael's doing but when the team lost it was everyone else's. A man with so much talent tends to render the concept of teamwork beside the point, if not wholly to derogate it.

When the Bulls first attempted to install their complicated Triangle offense, which would, among other things, have taken some of the pressure off Michael's having to score so frequently, he described it derisively as "an equal-opportunity offense." In *The Jordan Rules*, Sam Smith reports that once, during a time-out, Phil Jackson was designing a complex play in a tight spot. Cutting him short, Michael told him, "Give me the fuckin' ball." The temptation to do just that in each and

* Pocket Books, 1992.

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every tight spot had to be great. Basketball writers took to calling the Bulls "Michael and the Jordanaires," and Michael himself referred in a press conference to his teammates as "my supporting cast"—not a smart move in a man who made few bad moves, on the court or off.

OFF THE court, one of the reasons Michael was able to garner so much endorsement money is that he gave off the solidest of vibrations. Bill Russell, the great center of the Boston Celtics and then for a few years coach of the Seattle Supersonics, is said to hold a low opinion of most contemporary professional players. Yet he thought Michael an exception, a young man of good character. Halberstam notes in him "an innate elegance and coolness." He could make baldness look good, he wore clothes splendidly, and if there are still best-dressed-men lists he must be atop most of them. "I wanna be like Mike," was the tag line from his Gatorade commercial, and many people did.

He also had a way of making people forget about race. "As Jordan smiled," Halberstam writes, "race simply fell away." In good part this was owing to his absolute refusal to whine, complain, or show moodiness of the kind too many black athletes are susceptible of whenever things do not go their way. Unlike many of them, Michael never fell back on white racism as an excuse to justify poor performance or broken contract negotiations. No less impressively, he kept himself well away from the drug and easy-sex scenes that in recent decades have been part of the world of NBA players, young men with the dangerous combination of too much money and too much free time on their hands. The closest he came to scandal was when he lost serious-sized bets to a golf hustler with a criminal record.

Michael has also kept himself free from politics. When the Nike company was found to be manufacturing its products at low wages in southeast Asia, brave columnists in the *New York Times* proclaimed that Michael ought to denounce the practice and perhaps threaten to break with the company. But he chose not to speak on the matter—or on any other, similar matter. After one of the Bulls' championships, he even declined to attend the team meeting at the White House with George Bush, preferring to play golf. Whether he thinks politics bad for business, or just does not care, nobody knows for certain; perhaps a combination of the two keeps him apolitical.

Halberstam refers to Michael as "very well-spoken." I disagree. I would say he is half well-spoken. Certainly he has mastered the jock jabberwocky that passes for analysis in post-games interviews: "I thought we had a nice flow of energy out there, especially in the second half, when the momentum seemed to shift. But it was a question of whether we could keep our focus down the stretch and if our bench could step up, which they were able to do." He can also do the false-humility bit as well as anyone: at his retirement press conference, with journalists from all over the world gathered in a huge hall, he began by reminding everyone of a recently murdered Chicago policeman whose funeral was taking place the same day, noting that this was the real story of the moment.

Michael is more believable when his natural and controlled—and, I would add, earned—arrogance shows through. The genuine Michael is the man who replied, when asked what advice he might give to his then-teammate Dennis Rodman, who had taken to having himself photographed in a wedding dress: "I'd advise him to wear pants as often as possible." This is also the Michael who is said to have regularly driven the better part of the 30-mile trip from his suburban home to Bulls games in Chicago on the shoulder of the Kennedy expressway. Typically, the police, if they stopped him, would recognize him and let him go; when necessary, he gave them tickets to the game or a signed basketball before driving off.

Une saison en enfer, Arthur Rimbaud titled one of his two books of poems, but Rimbaud did not know the half of a season in hell of the kind Bull fans are currently undergoing without Michael Jordan. The team is currently in last place in its division in a season truncated by a long strike, and we figure to undergo many a sad *saison* more.

Without Michael, professional basketball itself has come to seem, at least to this fan, flat, devoid of drama, without magic. Still, one counts one's blessings. Having spent too many hours watching boys and men hit, kick, and throw balls, and having been born too late for Babe Ruth or Bobby Jones or the prime of Joe Louis, I am grateful that I was around to see my share of Michael Jordan. A fine rousing spectacle, watching this magnificent athlete who turned his sport into an art—the art of coming through in the clutch, which he did, splendidly, time after time after time.

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Observations

Prosperity for All?

Irwin M. Stelzer

The American economy moves from success to success. It is growing at a rate usually associated with the unleashing of inflationary pressures, and yet inflation is nil. Everyone who wants a job seems to have one. Indeed, many who until recently preferred the home to the workplace are finding jobs so plentiful, wages so good, and hours so flexible that they have given up the couch for a place in the service sector, itself growing more rapidly than the economy as a whole. And not only in the service sector: "Building contractors," reports the *Wall Street Journal*, "are desperately searching for women who are handy with a hammer and comfortable in a hard hat," as contractors bemoan their inability to find workers.

With jobs plentiful, consumers are confident about the future. Most think the country is on the right track. About 45 percent say they have "the perfect job," and an equal number complain about the stress of overwork. Few fear joining the unemployment line.

Workers are not alone in feeling that things are going well. Captains of industry, too, are satisfied with the trends. True, many profess to worry about their ability to keep profits growing, but (to judge by what they do rather than by what they say) American business is investing in new technology and new capacity at a record rate. As a consequence, productivity in America's factories increased by over 4 percent last year, enough for real wages to rise without pushing prices up.

Even bad news becomes good news when it reaches America. The travails of the Asian economies have forced producers there to lower the prices of their sneakers, vehicles, and T-shirts, and to flood the American market with cheap goods. This provides American consumers with a choice of the world's output at attractive prices and, not incidentally, also restrains domestic manufacturers from raising prices.

Perhaps even more important, everyone—well, almost everyone—is getting richer. Soaring prices of shares on the stock market have added some $8 trillion to household net worth in the past six years. That comes to approximately $80,000 per household—and this is after accounting for all the increased borrowing that has concerned many critics of the American boom. With pension accounts swollen, most Americans see little need to save, and so are spending what they earn and then some—creating jobs at the automakers who are struggling to meet the demand for giant sport-utility vehicles, the construction companies busily building ever-larger houses, and the retailers trying to maintain service standards while moving record amounts of goods from the shelf to the checkout line.

The astonishing performance of the American economy has, unsurprisingly, given rise to a subindustry of books analyzing its roots and forecasting its future. Two recent entries, one sober and worried, the other frankly celebratory, are worth a look for what they tell us both about the nature of the boom itself and about the current state of opinion on the larger economic and social questions it has raised.

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In *The New Dollars and Dreams: American Incomes and Economic Change*,* the more pessimistic of the two volumes, Frank Levy revisits a subject he first tackled in 1987 (hence the "New" in his title): the trend of American incomes from the end of World War II through the late 1990's. A professor of urban economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Levy is at his best—clear, coherent, and, despite the welter of statistics, interesting—when relating the first of "three different economic stories" that, to him, describe the development of the American economy in the past half-century. That is the story of the most visible economic variables: inflation, unemployment, and the government deficit.

Each of these variables has indeed "improved dramatically" over the last 50 years, Levy writes, but not without fits and starts. Between 1947 and 1959, "there would be another war [Korea], three bouts of inflation, and three recessions, the last of which would be quite serious," yet real incomes rose by more than a third, propelled by a rapid increase in productivity. A stockpile of innovations from the World War II years; workers eager to earn more in order to obtain conveniences denied them during the Great Depression and the war; demand strong enough to keep existing factories operating full tilt and to create a need for new, more efficient production facilities; and "a dose of good luck"—all these forces came together to increase what each worker could produce and thus to contribute to rising incomes.

The 1960's were just about as good. President John F. Kennedy used the budget surpluses willed to him by Dwight Eisenhower to cut taxes, and Lyndon Johnson then grafted an accelerated Vietnam-war effort onto a fully employed economy, financing it with budget deficits. This produced a short-run "boom of enormous proportions"—although it also "sowed the seeds for stubborn inflation" later.

Things turned sour in the early 1970's, when we entered a period that Levy describes as "economic stasis." Productivity slowed as oil prices soared, less experienced workers entered the workforce, and expanded environmental and workplace regulations drove costs up. The 1980's were better, but only by a bit. Ronald Reagan allowed Paul Volcker, chairman of the Federal Reserve, to induce a recession to sweat inflation out of the economy, after which growth resumed and unemployment fell. But, notes Levy, during the entire decade real median family income rose by only 4 percent.

Which brings us to the boom period of the 1990's, a tale that has been widely told and needs no repeating here. Levy's recitation of this decade is nowhere near so detailed as his exposition of earlier periods. Conceding that the overall economy is in reasonably good shape, he turns his attention instead to the second and third of his economic stories: the stubbornly slow growth of wages since the 1970's and the rising inequality of incomes—in a nutshell, what he deems the disappointing way in which our booming economy has been distributing its newfound riches among the American populace.

HERE IS where the second of the two new books, W. Michael Cox and Richard Alm's *Myths of Rich & Poor: Why We're Better Off Than We Think*,† helpfully enters the picture. Unlike Levy, who tells the story of the postwar American economy in close detail, backed by a copious and scrupulous presentation of relevant statistics, Cox and Alm (respectively, vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas and a business reporter with the *Dallas Morning News*) tell it *con brio*. More to the point, where Levy, in tracing his second and third stories, works more or less from the standard data on incomes and wages, Cox and Alm take a different and more illuminating tack.

"If you want to know about living standards," they tell us, "it's better to use direct indicators of what Americans own, what they buy, and how they live, not some proxy, whether it be earnings or income." From that perspective, and taking as their starting point the 1970's—the same decade from which Levy dates the slowing of growth in wages—Cox and Alm draw a glowingly brighter picture. Americans, they show, are living better than ever before.

In 1970, Cox and Alm write, each person in the average household could claim 478 square feet of living space; now, that figure is 814 square feet. Then, 29 percent of all American households owned two or more vehicles; now, 62 percent do. The portion of households with a gas range increased sixfold, the portion with a dishwasher doubled; the number of air miles traveled per capita quadrupled; and manufacturers' shipments of recreational vehicles rose from 30,000 to 281,000.

Nor has this spending been reckless: as Americans have consumed more, they have also gotten richer. Then, the median household—the one smack in the middle of the income distribution—was worth $86,000; by 1997, *before* the most recent surge in the stock market, that figure had risen to $127,000 (both figures in 1997 dollars). Although none of this directly contradicts Levy's less ebullient presentation, it does underline how looking at income figures alone can lead to a distorted view, vastly underestimating the enormous increase in living standards over the last quarter-century.

COX AND ALM also differ with Levy on the question of just how widely the benefits of postwar economic growth have been distributed. Levy, as I have suggested, sees a growing inequality. This he attributes to the

* Russell Sage Foundation, 248 pp., $39.95.
† Basic Books, 256 pp., $25.00.

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fact that the fastest-growing jobs demand an ever-higher level of the very skills that those at the bottom of the income heap do not possess and cannot easily acquire. This "skill bias" troubles him mightily, for it threatens to consign the uneducated to permanent poverty, forcing "large portions of the population [to] lose ground even as the economy grows." And that, in turn, bodes ill for the future of our market system and the freedoms associated with it.

Greater equality—or, as Levy would prefer to put it, less inequality—seems to him a goal so obvious that it needs no defense. Not for him Irving Kristol's admonition that the hunt for income equality

> peremptorily casts a pall of illegitimacy over the entire political history of the human race . . . implicitly indict[ing] Jerusalem and Athens and Rome and Elizabethan England, all of which thought inequality was necessary to achieve a particular degree of human excellence, both individual and collective.

But if Levy is on shaky ground conceptually, he is on truly mushy ground empirically.

It is certainly the case, as the economist Marvin Kosters has pointed out,* that there has occurred a "remarkable increase in wage premiums for schooling in the United States." What Levy adds to this is the troubling notion that increased schooling is simply not available to many people, or is very difficult to obtain. Hence his conclusion that, with education out of the reach of some (many?), we are no longer a nation characterized by the assured promise of upward mobility.

He is wrong on both counts. We are, in fact, witnessing a rapid increase in the portion of the population graduating from high school and obtaining college degrees. Markets work: as the rate of return on education has risen, so has the number of people of all income groups seeking out such education. If, in 1970, only 55 percent of men and women over the age of twenty-five had completed four years of high school, by 1998, according to the census bureau, that figure was well in excess of 83 percent. And if, in 1970, only one-third of high-school graduates between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four were enrolled in college, now some 45 percent are.

As for the related question of whether America remains an opportunity society or has become more rigidly stratified, once again Cox and Alm help us see the flaws in Levy's diagnosis. Levy dismisses as "overblown" the notion that "almost all workers still experience substantial income mobility over their careers," but Cox and Alm present powerful evidence that this is in fact the case. Using data gathered by both the University of Michigan and the Treasury Department, they show that individuals in the lowest income groups move very quickly up the income ladder. Thus, only 5 percent of those in the bottom fifth of the income pile in 1975 were still there in 1991. A majority had moved up to the middle class, and three out of ten made it to the top 20 percent. "Low income," conclude Cox and Alm, "is largely a transitory experience for those willing to work, a place Americans may visit but rarely stay."

Levy has an answer to this particular argument, though not a strong one. In a footnote, he contends that much of the mobility reflected in the Michigan and Treasury studies reflects the fact that the lowest income group is largely made up of teenagers and part-time workers, who will naturally move up the income scale as they take on more responsible positions with longer hours. But the counter-data Levy offers here, concentrating on the income histories of full-time male workers between the ages of twenty and fifty-nine, hardly support his case. What these data show is that two-thirds of those who were in the lowest bracket in 1975 had moved out of that group by 1991, with 40 percent rising to the middle class or higher.

FOR LEVY, the world is one of haves and have-nots, with the latter more or less stuck at the bottom of the pile. Not only are the unemployed and others outside the labor market suffering, but "in today's labor market, wages for unskilled workers do not guarantee self-sufficiency even for the most responsible." Cox and Alm vigorously dispute this contention, too.

To demonstrate the incidence of material deprivation in America, Levy once more relies on income data, and Cox and Alm once more direct our attention to consumption data. They are right to do so. As Nicholas Eberstadt has shown, the official poverty rate, which is estimated "on the basis of reported annual household *income*," in fact measures "the wrong thing": material deprivation "can be gauged only by patterns of *consumption*."† Studying those patterns among America's poor—people with incomes of $13,220 or less for an average-size family—Cox and Alm conclude that they can be considered poor only by the affluent standards of the world's richest country.

Thus, over 40 percent of the poor in America own their own homes, 72 percent have washing machines, 60 percent own microwave ovens, 92 percent have color-television sets, half have air conditioners, and 72 percent own one or more cars. Nor is that all. So rapidly has the living standard of the poor increased in the past quarter-century, write Cox and Alm, that "by the standards of 1971, many of today's poor families might be considered members of the middle class." Measuring by consumption, some of it made possible by a variety of income supplements from

* *Workers and Their Wages: Changing Patterns in the United States* (1991).

† *The Tyranny of Numbers: Mismeasurement & Misrule* (1995)

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government programs, some of it by drawing down savings during temporary periods of hard luck, Cox and Alm reckon that the proportion of poor in the United States has declined from 31 percent in 1949 to a mere 2 percent today. The poor may always be with us, but they will be a fewer and a richer poor as time goes on.

LEVY'S MISDIAGNOSIS both of the incidence of upward mobility and of the extent of material deprivation inevitably leads him astray when it comes to making recommendations for policy. If, he argues, the consensus in favor of "free-market policies" is to be maintained, the haves must compensate the have-nots. Either we must prove by our policies that John F. Kennedy was right to say that a rising tide lifts all boats, or we can "expect a collapse of popular support for markets and other pro-growth policies." To this end, he considers it crucial to strengthen "equalizing institutions," like the welfare state and trade unions, that can "blunt the most extreme market outcomes and try to ensure that most people benefit from economic growth."

Never mind that, as Charles Murray so thoroughly demonstrated in *Losing Ground*, the welfare state has had the unintended consequence of creating a dependency culture, freezing a small but vocal and socially destructive segment of the population into poverty, or that unions have hardly welcomed upward-striving newcomers like blacks, women, and immigrants to the ranks of construction crews or highly-paid manufacturing workers. Despite everything we have learned over the last decades about the deficiencies of these "equalizing institutions," Levy still looks to them as the main instruments by which economic winners should support economic losers. But he does not say just how this is supposed to happen, and to what greater degree than it happens at present.

After all, the progressive income tax, combined with the wide and increasing variety of entitlements, already substantially redistributes income from haves to have-nots. *Pace* Levy, the real trick, one would think, is not to extend government programs too far, lest they squeeze out voluntary charitable giving and discourage high earners from generating the wealth that in the end is the only source of improved living standards for all. Poor nations are not noted for the generosity of their welfare states.

On one level, Levy does seem aware of the limits on the government's ability to affect overall living standards. Like Cox and Alm, he recognizes that productivity is the key to higher living standards, and that education is the key to higher productivity. And like Cox and Alm, he concedes that government cannot do very much directly to affect the pace of productivity in a positive direction, while recognizing too that increased government regulation can actually divert resources from productivity-increasing investments to other, less helpful purposes.

Fortunately for the future of upward-striving Americans, government does not have to do much more than maintain our infrastructure and defend us against external threats. Most Americans have figured out for themselves that schooling pays increasing dividends, and are consequently staying in school longer. At the same time, they are stepping up their efforts to break the stranglehold on our educational system of the teachers' unions and government bureaucrats—two of Levy's "equalizing institutions" that for too long have equalized education downward.

Businesses, similarly, do not need governments to tell them that investments in human capital and productivity-enhancing devices pay huge dividends; if they have any doubts on that score, they might bear in mind Nobel laureate Gary Becker's estimate that 75 percent of America's capital consists of human capital—the embodiment of training and education in the nation's workforce. Businesses do need some help: they need the trade unions to get out of the way of new technology, and government to stop channeling resources to programs that cost more than they are worth. Left to its own devices, the American "corpocracy," purged of much of its sloth by Michael Milken's success in the 1980's at making credit available to entrepreneurs, and of its inefficiency by global competition in the 1990's, is capable of generating increasing wealth and of continuing to raise the living standards of the poor.

Levy fears declining "popular support for free-market policies." There are others today, further to his Left, who do not find such declining support something to fear but rather something to hope for, and even to work toward. But the rest of us would do well to take our bearings from Cox and Alm, who conclude that although capitalism will never be perfect, it can "continue to deliver benefits for all Americans."

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MUSIC

Masterpieces of the Century: A Finale

Terry Teachout

IT IS astonishing how much bad music has been called good in the course of the 20th century, and especially since the end of World War II. That is when such anti-tonal composers as Milton Babbitt, Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Elliott Carter, and Karlheinz Stockhausen gained effective control over the new-music establishment in Europe and America, in the process ruthlessly freezing out other artists who continued to assert the validity of traditional tonality.

In point of fact, the "innovations" of these composers were scarcely more than evasions—futile attempts to mask their own inability to renew and refresh the musical tradition they had inherited. Arnold Schoenberg, inventor of twelve-tone serialism and spiritual grandfather of the postwar avant-garde, once remarked truly that "there is a great deal more to be said in the key of C major." The pity is that he failed to recognize (or admit) how little of interest he himself had to say in that key, or any other. That Schoenberg and his descendants nonetheless managed to impose their own inadequacies on succeeding generations of composers—if not listeners—is a cultural tragedy of the first order.

But in the past decade the avant-garde monopoly has been decisively broken. As irony would have it, this happened in part thanks to the arrival on the scene of Philip Glass and his fellow "minimalists," whose postmodernist works, based on the familiar triad, immediately became hugely popular. Though the music of Glass, John Adams, and Steve Reich has proved too simple-minded to be of enduring interest, its popularity nonetheless served to clear the way for the restoration of tonality as the lingua franca of Western classical music. Today, growing numbers of young American composers are writing in styles that derive directly from the tonal modernism of such major prewar figures as Igor Stravinsky, Dmitri Shostakovich, Benjamin Britten, and Aaron Copland; these "new tonalists" are the vanguard of what seems likely to be the prevailing classical-music style of the 21st century.

THE BREAKUP of the avant-garde monopoly and the subsequent emergence of the new tonalists has made possible a rewriting of the history of modern music, as well as a revaluation of the historical significance of their predecessors, the tonal modernists.

As a step in this ongoing process, I have compiled a list of 50 major works written since 1900 by 29 composers, together with recommended recordings of each work. In order to give posterity a chance to speak its piece, I have chosen only works by composers no longer living, which means that the last item on the list was written as long ago as 1969. Otherwise, the sole criterion for inclusion has been not "significance" or "influence" but greatness: the list comprises solely what I believe to be masterpieces of permanent interest.

The first two installments of this "counter-canon," consisting of 40 works composed between 1902 and 1944, appeared in the April and May issues of COMMENTARY. By way of a reminder, here they are again, chronologically and in capsule form:

TERRY TEACHOUT, COMMENTARY's *music critic, is a contributor to* Time *magazine.*

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1902: Claude Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*

1903: Maurice Ravel, *String Quartet in F*

1904: Giacomo Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*

1909: Gustav Mahler, *Das Lied von der Erde* and *Symphony No. 9*

1910: Richard Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier, Op. 59*

1910-1913: Claude Debussy, *Preludes for Piano*

1911: Jean Sibelius, *Symphony No. 4 in A Minor, Op. 63*; Igor Stravinsky, *Petrushka*

1912: Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire, Op. 21*

1913: Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*

1915: Claude Debussy, *Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp*; Jean Sibelius, *Symphony No. 5 in E Flat, Op. 82*; Manuel de Falla, *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*

1917: Sergei Prokofiev, *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D*, Op. 19

1919: Sir Edward Elgar, *Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op. 85*

1921: Alban Berg, *Wozzeck*

1925: Leoš Janáček, *The Makropulos Case*

1926: Leoš Janáček, *Glagolitic Mass*

1928: Igor Stravinsky, *Apollo*

1930: Igor Stravinsky, *Symphony of Psalms*

1931: Maurice Ravel, *Piano Concerto in G*

1933: Kurt Weill, *The Seven Deadly Sins*

1934: Béla Bartók, *String Quartet No. 5*; Paul Hindemith, *Symphony, "Mathis der Maler"*; Sergei Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43*

1935: Alban Berg, *Violin Concerto*; George Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess*; Sir William Walton, *Symphony No. 1 in B-Flat Minor*

1936: Béla Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*; Sergei Prokofiev, *Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64*

1937: Francis Poulenc, *Tel jour, telle nuit*; Dmitri Shostakovich, *Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, Op. 47*

1938: Béla Bartók, *Violin Concerto No. 2*

1940: Paul Hindemith, *The Four Temperaments*

1941: Aaron Copland, *Piano Sonata*

1942: Sergei Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 7 in B Flat, Op. 83*

1943: Benjamin Britten, *Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings, Op. 31*; Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Symphony No. 5 in D*

1944: Aaron Copland, *Appalachian Spring*

Now for the final ten items on the list. These were composed in the decades immediately after the close of World War II—the period when the tonal modernists were most at bay, their music dismissed as irrelevant by aesthetic ideologues who preached the historical inevitability of atonality, serialism, and the still more radical departures from tradition that were introduced starting in the 50's. Yet, as these ten pieces prove, even when the avant-garde was at its most powerful, great tonal music continued to be written.

Following the list I shall conclude this three-part series with some thoughts about canon-making in general and about this counter-canon in particular.

1947
41. Maurice Duruflé
Requiem

Though Duruflé's output was modest—fewer than a dozen compositions—this quiet yet profound work, in which plainchant-derived melodic lines are spun over an austere yet unmistakably contemporary harmonic base, immediately established him as a master of modern liturgical music. Duruflé's *Requiem* is modeled after Gabriel Fauré's 1888 setting of the same text, and is directly comparable in every way to its beloved predecessor.

Matthew Best leads the Corydon Singers and the English Chamber Orchestra in a sensitive performance of the 1961 version, rescored for small orchestra (Hyperion CDA66191).

1948
42. Richard Strauss
Four Last Songs

The composer of *Don Juan* and *Der Rosenkavalier* lived into the era of high modernism, surviving World War II to become the last of the romantic composers. His level of inspiration diminished sharply in the 20's, but blossomed one final time in these radiantly beautiful orchestral songs, the last of which is an elegy for Strauss himself (the orchestra quotes from his *Death and Transfiguration* as the solo soprano sings the words "Is this, perhaps, death?"), and by extension for the spirit of German romanticism that dominated classical music throughout the 19th century.

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's 1953 recording, accompanied by Otto Ackermann and the Philharmonia Orchestra (with Dennis Brain playing the horn solos), is vocally fresher and less mannered than her better-known stereo remake with George Szell (EMI CDH 61001).

1949
43. Olivier Messiaen
Turangalila-symphonie

Though Messiaen taught Boulez and Stockhausen and even flirted with serialism, he never converted to avant-gardism, choosing instead to remain a mystically inclined neo-romantic who sought to expand the range of musical materials and sonorities available to the tradition-conscious innovator (including the use of actual bird songs, collected and meticulously transcribed by Messiaen himself). His highly individual methods are heard to spectacular effect in the *Turangalila-sym-*

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phonie, a vast orchestral canvas that he described as a "love song [and a] hymn to joy, time, movement, rhythm, life, and death."

Myung-Whun Chung's 1991 recording with pianist Yvonne Loriod and the Bastille Orchestra, made in the composer's presence, incorporates numerous revisions done by Messiaen in preparation for a second edition of the score (DGG 431 781-2).

1951

44. Erich Wolfgang Korngold
Symphony in F sharp, Op. 40

Just as Strauss was a post-Wagnerian composer, so Korngold was a post-Straussian composer. The surging *Jugendstil* romanticism of youthful operas like *Violanta* (1916) and *Die tote Stadt* (1919-20) was easily translated into the near-identical stylistic idiom of the Hollywood soundtracks he turned out in the 30's and 40's. But *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and *Kings Row* were not Korngold's last words as a composer: after World War II, he turned his back on Hollywood and produced a pair of large-scale pieces, a symphony and a violin concerto, in which his musical language became tougher and more challenging. The symphony in particular is fully as impressive as such better-known late-romantic compositions as Strauss's *Four Last Songs* and Rachmaninoff's "Paganini" Rhapsody, and though it went unplayed for three decades after its abortive premiere it is now increasingly regarded as a work whose time has come.

André Previn's recent recording with the London Symphony is exceptionally well performed (DGG 453 346-2).

1953

45. Samuel Barber
Hermit Songs, Op. 29

Hermit Songs, premiered by the young Leontyne Price, is the finest and most frequently performed song cycle so far composed by an American. The texts are poems and epigrams scrawled by medieval monks in the margins of manuscripts they were illuminating, and Barber's settings—by turns wry and passionate—underline the range of emotion found in these enigmatic fragments.

The best modern recording of *Hermit Songs* is by the American soprano Barbara Bonney, accompanied by André Previn and sensibly coupled with the other great American song cycle, Aaron Copland's *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* (London 289 455 511-2). Also available is a live recording of the 1953 premiere performance by Price and Barber, on a CD that contains as well Price's studio recording of Barber's lovely *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* (RCA 09026-61983-2).

1954

46. Benjamin Britten
The Turn of the Screw, Op. 54

From 1945 until his death in 1976, Benjamin Britten devoted himself mainly to opera, and many of the works he composed during those years have since entered the international repertoire. To choose among them is no easy task, but his chamber-opera version of Henry James's story, "The Turn of the Screw," is widely considered to be the greatest opera written since World War II, and very possibly the best English-language opera ever. Myfanwy Piper strongly suggests in her libretto what James's original story left shrouded in doubt—that the children have been sexually molested—and the sinister beauty of Britten's music adds immeasurably to the terror of the situation.

An exemplary interpreter of his own music, Britten conducted the first recording of *The Turn of the Screw*, featuring the cast of the original English Opera Group production (including Sir Peter Pears as Peter Quint). The boxy mono sound does nothing to diminish the unsettling intensity of this historic performance (London 425 672-2, two CD's).

1956

47. Francis Poulenc
Dialogues of the Carmelites

Many modern opera composers, Benjamin Britten foremost among them, experimented with the possibilities of chamber opera, but the wide range of resources offered by largehouse opera remained an irresistible challenge. No composer met that challenge more effectively than Francis Poulenc in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, an operatic version of Georges Bernanos's play about the persecution and martyrdom of a group of Roman Catholic nuns during the French Revolution. Though the final scene, in which the nuns are guillotined one by one, is a much-admired theatrical *tour de force*, Poulenc's opera is especially memorable for its poignant portrayal of how perfect love casts out fear.

The best recording of *Dialogues of the Carmelites* is still the original mono version featuring Pierre Dervaux conducting the cast of the 1956 Paris Opera production, many of whom also appeared in the work's La Scala premiere (EMI CDCB 49331, two CD's).

48. Miklós Rózsa
Violin Concerto, Op. 24

Like Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Miklós Rózsa is remembered for the grandiloquent scores he composed for Hollywood, among them such epics as *Ben-Hur* and *King of Kings*. But as he hints in the witty title of his 1989 memoirs, *A Double Life* (also the title of one of the many films he scored), he cultivated paths outside Hollywood, using his film-music fees to support less popular projects. Snobbish critics and performers reflexively dismissed his classical compositions without listening to them, but recent recordings of his music leave little doubt that he was, after Bartók, the foremost Hungarian composer of the 20th century. Jascha Heifetz, one famous instrumentalist who did recognize Rózsa's genius, commissioned, premiered,

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and recorded his Violin Concerto, a taut, harmonically astringent work that is as memorable as the better-known concertos of Berg, Bartók, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Walton, and deserves an equally prominent place in the standard repertoire.

The Rózsa Violin Concerto has yet to receive a modern recording by a world-class soloist (Gil Shaham or Maria Bachmann would be ideal), but Heifetz's 1956 recording with Walter Hendl and the Dallas Symphony, made two months after the premiere, is marvelously incisive, and is coupled on CD with another underrated modern work premiered by Heifetz, Korngold's D-Major Violin Concerto, Op. 35 (RCA 09026-61752-2).

1960

49. Dmitri Shostakovich
String Quartet No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 110

Relentlessly pressured to adopt the bland, mindlessly optimistic official style of "socialist realism," Shostakovich responded by incorporating into his later scores coded messages of dissent. A case in point is the Eighth Quartet, nominally dedicated to "the victims of fascism and war" but actually a musical description of Shostakovich's own persecution by Soviet cultural commissars. The composer's "musical signature," D-E flat-C-B ("D. Sch." in German notation), is used as the opening theme, and quotations from his earlier works appear throughout the piece, together with a pointed reference to the Russian revolutionary song, "Tortured by Heavy Bondage." But one need not be aware of the autobiographical message of the Eighth Quartet in order to respond to its harrowing, tragic intensity; it ranks high among the century's supreme chamber-music masterpieces.

To judge by their concert performances of the later Shostakovich quartets, the Emerson String Quartet's forthcoming recording of the complete cycle, to be released by DGG later this year, will be a major musical event. In the meantime, there is a very good "creator" recording made in 1962 by the Beethoven Quartet (Consonance 81-3006).

1969

50. Dmitri Shostakovich
Symphony No. 14, Op. 135

The Fourteenth Symphony, an eleven-movement song cycle for soprano, bass, strings, and percussion, is the most powerful of the half-dozen major works Shostakovich composed in the shadow of his impending death. Written in homage to Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, the Fourteenth Symphony is also, like the Eighth Quartet, an exercise in multiple meanings. The texts—Russian translations of poems by García Lorca, Apollinaire, and Rilke, all describing aspects of death—were intended by Shostakovich to be understood as referring as well to the brutalities inflicted on the Russian people by the ruthless tyrants who ruled them.

Mstislav Rostropovich's incandescent 1973 recording with soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, bass Mark Reshetin, and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra is currently out of print, but Revelation has released a radio broadcast of a contemporary live performance by the same forces (all of whom, except for Rostropovich, also took part in the premiere). The mono sound is serviceable, the interpretation fiery (Revelation RV 10101).

Afterthoughts

To draw up a list of 50 modern masterpieces is to spend much of one's time making hard choices—almost impossible choices, really, since there is no shortage of great music composed in the 20th century. Although a few selections were obvious, others proved inordinately difficult. Not a few, moreover, ended up being almost arbitrary, there being no rational way to decide whether, in the case of a particular composer, one of his masterpieces is "better" than another of similar quality and character.

I gave serious consideration to a number of such pieces. For the record, they included, in alphabetical order: Barber's Piano Sonata (1949); Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra (1944); Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, Op. 28 (1942) and *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33 (1945); Copland's *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1950); Debussy's G-Minor Violin Sonata (1917); Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Op. 38 (1900) and Symphony No. 2 in E Flat, Op. 63 (1911); Gershwin's *An American in Paris* (1928); Janáček's String Quartet No. 1 (1923); Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C, Op. 26 (1921) and Symphony No. 5 in B Flat, Op. 100 (1944); Ravel's Piano Trio in A Minor (1914) and Left-Hand Piano Concerto (1930); Strauss's *Elektra* (1908); Stravinsky's *Les Noces* (1917) and Symphony in Three Movements (1945); Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* (1910); and Walton's Viola Concerto (1929) and *Variations on a Theme of Paul Hindemith* (1962).

In addition, I considered three works by composers who failed in the end to make the final cut: Leonard Bernstein's *Fancy Free* (1944); Gustav Holst's *The Planets* (1918); and Aleksandr Scriabin's Piano Sonata No. 10, Op. 70 (1913). I also gave thought to pieces by other outstandingly gifted modernists of the second rank. Among them, again in alphabetical order, were: Ernest Bloch's First Concerto Grosso (1925); Alberto Ginastera's First Piano Sonata (1951); Percy Grainger's *Lincolnshire Posy* (1937); Roy Harris's Third Symphony (1937); Constant Lambert's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1935); Frank Martin's *Petite Symphonie Concertante* (1945); Bohuslav Martinu's Double Concerto (1938); Sir Michael Tip-

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pett's *The Midsummer Marriage* (1952); and Peter Warlock's The *Curlew* (1922).

All these possible candidates for inclusion, by the way, are available on CD in excellent performances.

It is, I believe, a revealing exercise to break down my final list by composer. Of the 29 composers, the list features:

- One composer, Igor Stravinsky, with four entries.
- Four composers with three entries each: Béla Bartók, Claude Debussy, Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich.
- Ten composers with two entries each: Alban Berg, Benjamin Britten, Aaron Copland, Paul Hindemith, Leoš Janáček, Gustav Mahler, Francis Poulenc, Maurice Ravel, Jean Sibelius, Richard Strauss.
- Fourteen composers with one entry each: Samuel Barber, Maurice Duruflé, Sir Edward Elgar, Manuel de Falla, George Gershwin, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Olivier Messiaen, Giacomo Puccini, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Miklós Rózsa, Arnold Schoenberg, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Sir William Walton, Kurt Weill.

Even a casual glance at this four-tiered hierarchy suggests the extent to which my list deviates from conventional accounts of the modern movement in music. To take two conspicuous examples: Arnold Schoenberg, long thought to be Stravinsky's peer, has here been relegated to the lowest tier, while his pupil Anton Webern, whose music was hugely influential among post-World War II serialists, does not appear at all. Similarly, only one *fully* serial composition, Berg's Violin Concerto, is included, and except for Berg's *Wozzeck* and Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, none of the other pieces can properly be described as of the atonal school.

No less interesting is the ethnic distribution of the list: the ratio of Franco-Russian or English-speaking composers to Austro-German composers is almost three to one. Clearly, the geographical center of cultural dominance in classical music shifted decisively during the 20th century. Whatever their ethnic background or cultural loyalties, however, the greatest composers of the century remained steadfast in their allegiance to traditional forms: on the list are eleven symphonies, eight operas, seven ballet scores, and six concertos.

Finally, the chronological scatter of the 50 pieces illustrates the havoc wrought by the postwar avant-garde: 39 were composed prior to 1945, only 11 afterward. Even allowing for the omission of works by living composers, this is a strong indication of the extent to which the momentum of tonal modernism was disrupted after World War II. The fact, moreover, that serialism and the avant-garde failed to produce more than a handful of masterpieces underlines the damage it caused to modern music of *any* kind. Time and again, as new works praised by prestigious critics turned out to be ugly and unmemorable, concertgoers concluded that there were no modern composers worth hearing, and gave up on all new music, good and bad alike.

One can only trust that the current revival of tonality will have the consequence of changing public attitudes toward 20th-century music. For the not-so-secret secret is that the supreme masterpieces of our waning century—Sibelius's Fifth Symphony, Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, Bartók's Second Violin Concerto, Copland's *Appalachian Spring*—are fully as accessible, and as spiritually nourishing, as the best music of Mozart, Schubert, or Brahms. Listening to these sublime works, one recalls the words of Paul Hindemith, tonal modernism's most eloquent spokesman:

> For the communication of things so far unsaid, the only path now left open to the musician is the one leading to the other dimension of height and depth—to the heights of the spirit (whose potentialities we can grasp by comparison with religion, philosophy, and the pure sciences) and to the depths of the human psyche.

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Books in Review

Jilted

All Too Human:
A Political Education
by George Stephanopoulos
Little, Brown. 456 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Gabriel Schoenfeld

One of the dubious pleasures of American politics these days is observing (at a distance) the strange creatures constantly thrusting themselves into prominent positions on the public stage. Over the past six and a half years, the presidency of Bill Clinton has offered a particularly rich parade, and one who has garnered more than his share of notice has been George Stephanopoulos. A former senior adviser to the President, Stephanopoulos is now a visiting professor of politics at Columbia University and a commentator for ABC.

In some ways, the story Stephanopoulos tells in *All Too Human*, his best-selling book about his path to the White House, is straightforward enough. In 1991, while working as a ranking aide to House majority leader Richard Gephardt, he decided to try his hand at presidential politics. After assessing the various Democratic horses, he hitched himself and his liberal political attitudes to a "thoroughbred"—his term of praise for Bill Clinton. For the next fourteen frenetic months, he toiled as a kind of high-level stable hand, burnishing his candidate's message, feeding sugar cubes to the media, and covering tales of draft-dodging and sexual hijinks with hay.

But once ensconced in the White House as the President's new chief spokesman, Stephanopoulos found that things did not go quite so winningly. Bill Clinton's "honeymoon" began with a series of spectacular gaffes: consecutive nominees for attorney general beset with nanny problems; a presidential pledge to allow gays into the military; a presidential haircut (by Christophe) in an idling Air Force One; the burning of David Koresh's complex at Waco; the firing of the White House travel-office staff. In contending with these fiascoes, Stephanopoulos was, he concedes here, a flop: his combativeness earned him the ire both of the press and of his superiors, and he was finally removed from his position, "congratulated," as he writes, on a "promotion" he had not heard about before it was announced.

Though being kicked upstairs was a painful public humiliation—the more so since he was replaced by David Gergen, a former aide to such Republican villains as Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan—all was not yet lost. Over the next year and a half, Stephanopoulos, operating from a cubbyhole adjacent to the Oval Office, began to climb back up the ladder, a struggle he recounts here rung by rung. With virtually unrestricted access to the President, he writes that he was able to play a central role in both domestic- and foreign-policy decision-making, helping, for example, to select a Supreme Court Justice and plotting a mini cruise-missile attack on Iraq.

By November 1994, just when Stephanopoulos seemed to have recovered fully from his mortifying fall, another calamity struck; the voters turned out the Democrats

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from Congress *en masse* and Newt Gingrich was elected Speaker of the House. Clinton's reaction, according to Stephanopoulos, was to emit a "silent scream. No yelling, no finger in your face, nothing. Just silence." It was then that the President began simultaneously to freeze out his aide and to change political gears, "triangulating" according to the geometry of another longtime Republican adviser, the pollster Dick Morris.

Over the next two years Stephanopoulos hung tough, once again managing to score comebacks here and there—supervising the President's "mend-it-don't-end-it" review of affirmative action, fighting the budget wars against congressional right-wingers bent on shutting down the government. But things would never be the same. The heaviest blow was being excluded from the weekly high-level White House strategy meetings. This disgrace, Stephanopoulos writes, "was killing me and my pride," and in short order he made his exit. By the time Monica Lewinsky became a household name, he was in an ABC studio, wagging an accusatory finger at the President with one hand and signing a multimillion-dollar, tell-all book contract with the other.

Though the reviewers have dismissed *All Too Human* as a somewhat dreary read and lacking in candor, they are not altogether on the mark about the latter point. The book may not tell us anything wholly new about the Clinton presidency, but it does usefully confirm outsiders' impressions of its fecklessness and vacuity while adding authoritative emphases that could come only from one who saw it up close. It also offers a generous glimpse of George Stephanopoulos himself, an exemplar of a new breed of *homo politicus Americanus*.

As he relates with some pride, Stephanopoulos, like the President and quite a few other members of the administration, is a former Rhodes

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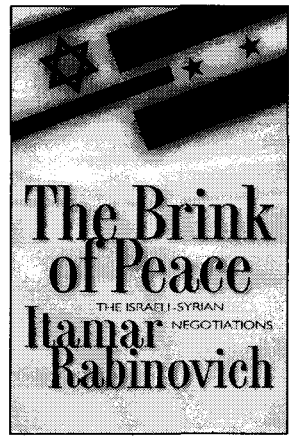

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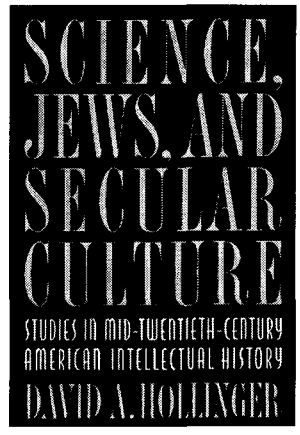

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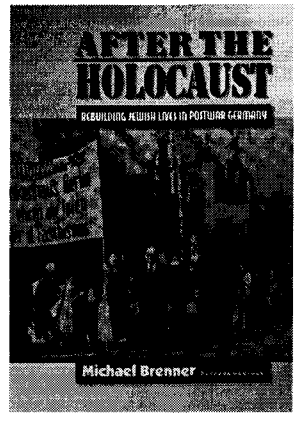

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scholar. That is, he expatiates, he has benefited greatly from the chance to ponder "the fundamental questions of politics—war and peace, life and liberty." To judge, however, by the essentially contentless contents of this book, the sole effect of his Oxford association has been to supply him with what he himself calls a "ticket to the establishment." The few attempts here to address the "fundamental questions of politics" do not rise above the level of the sound-bites he crafted for the President-to-be.

During the campaign, in any event, far more "fundamental" to Stephanopoulos than the great questions of politics were the secrets of Clinton's prior life and what they might portend for *him*:

> A blow job in a car ten years ago? A one-night stand or two? I couldn't bear the thought that an old dalliance dredged up by a tabloid would curtail the professional experience of my life.

In passages like this—and there are many like it in *All Too Human*—one comes close to the essential Stephanopoulos, a man who habitually congratulates himself on doing good while exposing his ruling passion for doing well. Here he is, for instance, on his first night at Blair House:

> As the butler ushered me up to the second floor, I pocketed the gilded card that carried my name, spelled correctly, in an elegant calligrapher's script. Closing the door, I lay back on the feather bed and luxuriated in the feeling of being one of the chosen.

But the most striking persona to emerge from these pages is neither that of the climber nor that of the operator, but that of the suitor. When Stephanopoulos writes about the person of Bill Clinton, he sounds like no one so much as the world's most famous intern, Monica Lewinsky. "Bill Clinton wasn't my type," he declares early on, and friends even suggested that he was "marrying the wrong girl." But a relationship developed between the two men that was "intense, intimate at times." Coos Stephanopoulos: "I was just happy to be his stablemate, the little goat by his side who usually knew what to say and had a knack for keeping him calm."

Like Monica, Stephanopoulos lingers lovingly on the President's cravats (one, an "iridescent" number, featured "shiny gold horns against a deep blue background"); focuses obsessively on the shortcomings of his own personal appearance (the stress-induced hives that covered his chin, his disfigured fingernails); frets at being cut off from the President's "raw, naked, intelligent, proud, and profane humanity." And when at last the handwriting appears on the wall, like Monica again he assuages his grief with the aid of an anti-depressant, the wonder-drug Zoloft.

CAN ONE draw a line between the touchy-feely, arrogant, self-absorbed personality of George Stephanopoulos, with his many look-alikes in the Clinton White House, and the methods of governance he tells us were followed there?

As far as foreign policy is concerned, even the most sensitive issues seem to have been evaluated in Stephanopoulos's time on the basis not of any stable set of intellectual criteria but of how they would play in the polls. During the Bosnian crisis of 1994, for example, one simple and irrefutable fact, plus one overriding objective, ensured that the favored military option would be air power. The simple fact was that "bombing polled well; ground troops didn't," and the overriding objective was to repair the reputation of a President widely perceived to be a vacillator. As Dick Morris explained to Stephanopoulos at one critical juncture, "I want to bomb the shit out of the Serbians to [make Clinton] look strong." Shortly thereafter the bombs fell, and the poll numbers duly rose.

For snapshots like this one, and for what they reveal of the abysses to which the American political class has sunk, we owe a small measure of debt to George Stephanopoulos's unctuous and faithless confessions.

Beyond the Pale

Gideon's Spies:
The Secret History
of the Mossad
by Gordon Thomas
St. Martin's. 354 pp. $26.95

Reviewed by
Daniel Pipes

IN THIS book, Gordon Thomas, a Welsh journalist living in Dublin, claims that long before Kenneth Starr had ever heard of Monica Lewinsky, Israel's intelligence service was in possession of tapes containing 30 hours' worth of intimate talk between President Clinton and his young intern. Thomas also asserts that Jerusalem was holding these tapes either for possible blackmail or to protect its mole in the White House, code-named "Mega."

Thomas's allegations first surfaced several months ago, and the White House promptly dismissed them as "nonsense." ("To tell you the truth," sneered one administration source about *Gideon's Spies*, "booksellers ought to consider selling it in the fiction section.") In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman David Bar-Illan likewise characterized Thomas's charges as "beyond the pale and beneath contempt," wondering

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DANIEL PIPES *is the director of the Middle East Forum and the author of* The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy *(St. Martin's) and* Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes, and Where It Comes From *(Free Press).*

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aloud how anyone "can take seriously such unmitigated drivel."

Who is to be trusted? Administration officials have lied too often for their word to be taken at face value, and Israel has not exactly been in the business of acknowledging its spy operations. Then, too, the Starr report itself records Monica Lewinsky as saying that the President "suspected that a foreign embassy (he did not specify which one) was tapping his telephones."

All of which, especially in a culture that has become increasingly receptive to tales of Israeli mischief, makes it important to look a little more closely at *Gideon's Spies*.

The book certainly contains many eye-popping claims. Thomas holds Israel's intelligence agency, the Mossad, responsible for the deaths of Princess Diana (whose driver it supposedly pressured to the breaking point); the publishing tycoon Robert Maxwell (whom it supposedly murdered); 241 U.S. Marines in Lebanon in 1983 (about whose planned fate at the hands of Hezbollah it supposedly had advance knowledge); and William Buckley, a CIA agent (whom it supposedly let die so the PLO would take the blame). Thomas's "secret history" also reveals that the Mossad helped the (failed) putsch of Soviet hardliners against Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991, and purposely destroyed the CIA's network in South Africa.

Nor, preposterous as it sounds, is this all. Gordon goes on for many pages about a remarkable computer program, Promis, which the Mossad allegedly bought in 1981 from a U.S. corporation named Inslaw. This software, according to Thomas, can "electronically probe into the lives of people in a way never before possible." During the *intifada*, the 1987-92 Palestinian uprising against Israel, Promis gave Israel the means to "lock on to computers in the PLO's seventeen offices scattered around the world"; Israel's intelligence service could thereby learn what "aliases and false passports" Yasir Arafat was using and track his phone bills and the numbers he called, with the result that, wherever he went, "Arafat would be unable to hide."

More broadly, by following a terrorist's "every step," Promis allowed Israel to know "exactly when and where" terrorist operations of any kind would occur. And, still better, after reverse-engineering the program and adding several features, including a "trapdoor" microchip, Mossad's technicians could sell Promis to others—like Jordanian and Soviet intelligence—and track what they were up to in precise detail.

There is much more in *Gideon's Spies* along the same or similar lines. It is, of course, impossible to confirm or disconfirm so-called findings based on secret tape-recordings or miracle computer programs manufactured by corporations obscure except to conspiracy theorists. All one can say is that, if Israel's intelligence capacity were really what Thomas alleges it to be, the *intifada* would have been stopped dead in its tracks, and the problem of anti-Jewish terrorism in the world would have long since subsided.

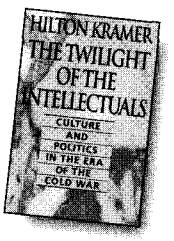
In any case, when it comes not to unverifiable assertions but to known and checkable facts, Thomas can hardly be said to inspire confidence. A few examples must suffice.

Thomas's command of Middle East *realia* is faulty in the extreme. He makes up Arabic words (no dictionary of mine has the word *mafafeth*, which he mistakenly believes means a meeting house) and mistranslates others (*abu*, or father, as "voice" being only the most egregious instance). He also routinely garbles common names, referring to Lebanon's Maronite Catholics as Marionites, to the Iranian arms dealer Ghorbanifar as Thorbanifar, and to Saddam Hussein's brother Sab'awi as Sabba'a. Chronology poses a particular stumbling block: Thomas misdates the Mossad's ear-

New and important

Hilton Kramer

The Twilight of the Intellectuals



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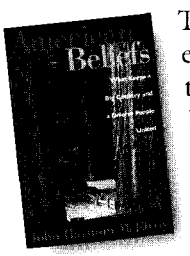

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liest roots by decades, has Richard Helms filling the position of director of Central Intelligence in 1957 (he actually took over in 1966), and calls the Yom Kippur war of 1973 the "second full-scale Arab war" with Israel, somehow forgetting 1967. And so forth.

The book contains raging inconsistencies. On one page Thomas asserts that Jonathan Pollard, the American who spied for Israel, "had the highest possible U.S. intelligence-community security clearance"; a few pages later, it turns out that Pollard's security clearance "had not been enough" to obtain the documents his handlers requested. In one place, we are told Charles de Gaulle stopped all arms shipments to Israel in 1965; elsewhere, the same event is recorded as having taken place in 1968.

Ignorance is never far from the surface. Thomas refers, for example, to "a tribesman of the Sarami, the oldest of the Islamic Sufi sects," but Sufi orders are not sects, and the Sarami order, far from being the oldest, does not even exist. If we are to believe Thomas, whirling dervishes come from Africa (not Turkey), the Pope today is an "absolute ruler," and the CIA has "hundreds of thousands" of employees. Other statements simply boggle the mind, as when Thomas confidently asserts that the head of the Mossad paid informers "a bonus of one U.S. dollar" for "each terrorist killed by Mossad." Now *there* was an inducement.

On page 56 of *Gideon's Spies*, Thomas deals with the catastrophic explosion on TWA flight 800 in 1996. The idea that there may have been a Middle Eastern connection to this tragedy—an idea picked up by "thousands of media stories"—was, Thomas asserts, a product of Israeli disinformation. He quotes James Kallstrom, the FBI agent in charge of the investigation, who allegedly told his colleagues in private: "If there was any way of nailing those bastards in Tel Aviv . . . , I sure would like to see it happen. We had to check every item they slipped into the media." The only problem is that Kallstrom, with whom I have spoken, characterizes this story as "total nonsense" and categorically denies ever having said any such thing. In fact, he told me, the Israelis were "extremely helpful" in the investigation.

When it is not indulging in "total nonsense" of this kind, *Gideon's Spies* offers an unexceptionable if banal and derivative account of well-known Mossad undertakings, including the placement of Eli Cohen in Damascus in the late 1950's and the 1976 rescue of hostages at Entebbe. But even here, Thomas inexplicably omits some of the organization's truly great feats—notably, its success in securing a copy of Nikita Khrushchev's secret party speech in 1956 repudiating Stalin.

IN BRIEF, what is reliable in this book is old-hat, while what is new is utterly unreliable, a mishmash of blather and fantasy. Yet *Gideon's Spies* is also a dangerous book, and one that is likely to have a continuing impact.

For one thing, Thomas is hardly the first to tread this particular path. Prior books "exposing" the Mossad include the pseudo-insider Victor Ostrovsky's duo, *By Way of Deception* and *The Other Side of Deception*, and the ravings of Ari Ben-Menashe, about whom Thomas accurately says that "few could tell a tale better." Thomas praises each of these fantasists for the "hard information" they supply about the Mossad, and even invokes an unrelated but no less conspiracy-mad study, *Government by Gunplay* (1976) by Sidney Blumenthal (who has since gone on to other if not higher things). Tellingly, however, his bibliography omits solid works like Anita Engle's *The Nili Spies* (1959, reissued 1997) or Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman's *Every Spy a Prince* (1990).

Not only does *Gideon's Spies* take its place within a well-established genre, it recycles a number of equally well-entrenched ideas. Thus, Thomas interweaves a tale about Israeli arms-sales to Iran with the thesis of an "October Surprise" involving the incoming Reagan administration in 1980, a canard that has been proved false by no fewer than two congressional panels and a roster of journalists. And he rehashes other old myths as well—that Israeli intelligence staged the attempted bombing of an El Al airliner in 1986 (it was in fact the work of Syria), or that a "rogue CIA group" carried out the Pan Am 103 bombing two years later.

But if in essential respects *Gideon's Spies* resembles its predecessors, making basically the same case for the proposition that the Mossad is an octopus whose tentacles reach into all the world's power centers, it also makes that case more effectively. For Thomas, a credentialed journalist, advances his arguments not in the form of a crabbed, hate-filled diatribe issued by a fringe publisher but in what is, on the whole, a jaunty, well-written, and handsomely produced book bearing the imprint of a reputable house. In contrast to the others, moreover, Thomas does not seem to hold any obvious grudge against the Mossad, an intelligence service he dubs "more formidable than any other in the world." (His true feelings do occasionally slip out, though, as when he compares Israel's response to the *intifada* with Nazi actions in France.)

What the surface reasonableness of *Gideon's Spies* serves to mask, however, is the extent to which Thomas, exactly like every other conspiracy theorist, seeks to persuade us that political realities are the opposite of what we know to be the truth (for instance, that Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was a "virulent" anti-American who would "do anything" to reduce Washington's influence in the world). In this crucial sense, *Gideon's Spies* fits not only into the recent genre of books about the Mossad but into a vast, two-century-old lit-

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erature promoting the idea of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. Pseudo-factual writings of this sort may look risible, but they are not. To the contrary, they form a necessary background to retaliatory action against those identified as the guilty party.

Thus, the late-19th-century florescence of writing about a Jewish world conspiracy, culminating in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, laid the basis for the later Nazi assault against the Jews just as surely as Communist literature targeting the bourgeoisie laid the groundwork for the terror-to-come of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, or the anti-Kurd spoutings of Saddam Hussein's regime prepared the way for genocide in the north of Iraq. If conspiracist tracts of this nature cannot be entirely discredited, it is nevertheless of critical importance that they be exposed and denounced. At the very least, one can thereby hope to minimize the damage they are likely to do.

Bearing Witness

The Twilight of the Intellectuals: Culture and Politics in the Era of the Cold War

by Hilton Kramer

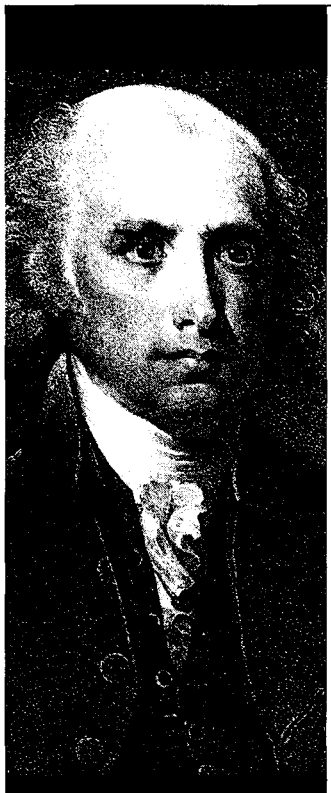
Ivan R. Dee. 363 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
Michael J. Lewis

"In a peaceful age," George Orwell once remarked, "I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is, I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer." With characteristic pessimism, Orwell did not congratulate himself on the great change of career that would end by making him a major historical figure. For him, political tracts—no matter how well written—were a lower order of literature, although under certain circumstances the writing of them might well be a moral duty.

A similar sense of moral duty is, assuredly, what has propelled Hilton Kramer, perhaps America's most distinguished and certainly its most literate critic of art, into becoming as well a "pamphleteer" in the high Orwell tradition. Since the early 1950's, when his essays and reviews began appearing in *Arts Magazine*, *Partisan Review*, the *Nation*, and Commentary, Kramer has been a principled and discriminating champion of modern art. His hallmark as a critic is a scrupulous, often exquisite, concern for the aesthetic

Michael J. Lewis, *who contributed "The Master of Drip" to our February issue, teaches American art at Williams College.*



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primacy of the object itself—that is, for the formal properties of a work of art—and secondarily for its place within the art of its time. But as every aspect of art, from its making and display to its criticism and historiography, has in the past generation become relentlessly politicized, Kramer too has turned to politics, and to the larger culture of ideas in which contemporary art has become, willy-nilly, a "player."

This is the background to the 26 essays collected in *The Twilight of the Intellectuals*. Despite its spacious title, the book is largely devoted to a single subject: the vast deposit of biographies, memoirs, and occasional pieces by and about the generation of American writers and intellectuals who came of age in the 1930's and came to grief amid the radical upheavals of the late 1960's. Most of the essays in the book first appeared in the *New Criterion*, the journal Kramer and the late Samuel Lipman established in 1982 to provide a vehicle for formal aesthetic criticism of the sort that, thanks to those same late-60's forces, had vanished from the professional and popular press. But the theme of *The Twilight of the Intellectuals* is not so much art as it is the philosophical confrontation of American intellectuals with the two principal transformative forces of the 20th century, Marxism and modernism.

As Kramer shows in essay after essay, many of these intellectuals failed in one way or another to stand up to the Communist threat in the decades when it posed a mortal danger to the democratic societies of the West. Their epigones continue to fail a similar test today: although the collapse of the Soviet Union ought, once and for all, to have retroactively justified the anti-Communist cause, Kramer finds the opposite to be the case. There is a general tendency to downplay the magnitude of the Soviet threat, and to take the waning of Communism as evidence that that threat had been exaggerated all along.

This is especially apparent in the works of younger authors whose political understanding has been shaped by cold-war revisionism. Thus, Kramer shows, the first-rate research that went into Michael Shelden's 1997 biography of George Orwell is compromised by Shelden's unwillingness to grant Orwell the sincerity of his own anti-Stalinist convictions. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for example, Shelden sees less a response to Soviet totalitarianism than a working-out of sublimated anguish over the bullying Orwell had suffered in school; the result, in Kramer's words, is a "benign, politically defanged portrait" that traduces its subject.

To be sure, not all recent biographies of cold-war figures are equally compromised—Sam Tanenhaus's *Whittaker Chambers*, for example, is judged by Kramer to be "one of the best books written about the Communist experience in America." But it is also an exception. In general, what Kramer discerns in the newer generation of biographers is historical ignorance combined with a resolute refusal to come to grips with the moral aspects of their subjects' public behavior. Instead, treatments of Communists, ex-Communist leftists, and other such icons of the liberal culture tend to reduce moral considerations to a matter of personal psychology. The effects of this tendency Kramer traces not only in the case of someone like Shelden but, in the book's most brilliant essay, in recent works about the Bloomsbury circle.

The great Bloomsbury "revival," which began in the late 1960's and shows no sign of diminishing, has had, Kramer writes, little if anything to do with the actual ideas and accomplishments of that self-consciously amoral British enclave that produced the art critic Roger Fry, the economist John Maynard Keynes, and the novelist E. M. Forster; it has had much more to do with a voyeuristic fascination with their "lifestyle," especially their sexual lifestyle. Demonstrating his own fidelity to an older and more stringent mode, Kramer connects this lapse into voyeurism with the decline of the once-demanding vocation of literary criticism. For "criticism," he writes, "creates standards; biography—as it is currently practiced, anyway—creates idols (or else topples them)."

THERE ARE many more trenchant and powerfully argued essays in this book. One of them, which caused a furor at the time of its original publication, is itself a small chapter in the history of the cold war, being the piece Kramer published in 1976 in the *New York Times* on the blacklisted Hollywood Ten. Anticipating by twenty years the recent uproar over the presentation to Elia Kazan of an Academy Award, he boldly called attention to the "other blacklist," the old Hollywood practice of punishing *anti*-Communists. But to return to the twinned theme of Marxism and modernism, two essays of special interest here are the ones devoted to the art critic Clement Greenberg, whose work was in many ways a forerunner of Kramer's own.

Greenberg, who died in 1994, was a disaffected veteran of the Popular Front struggles of the 1930's—disaffected from nothing so much as from the doctrine that the purpose of art was to serve as an instrument of class struggle. His break with this Marxist shibboleth was most forcefully (and, be it said, dogmatically) articulated in his 1939 essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," a work that would provide the ideological underpinning for the flowering of postwar Abstract Expressionism.

Ironically, Greenberg's attempt to define a neutral terrain for art, a terrain beyond the demands of politics, resulted decades later in *his* being branded an instrument of cold-war American imperialism—by, naturally, the latter-day avatars of the 30's Stalinists. Greenberg's criticism is now routinely dismissed as polit-

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ically tainted; as Kramer notes, even the editor of Greenberg's collected essays has come to regard him with distaste. In commenting on this melancholy development, Kramer implicitly comments as well on his own situation: that of a fierce and fearless defender of artistic autonomy who, in a cultural environment more thoroughly politicized today than ever it was in the 1930's, has himself become the object of smears as a "political" critic.

In the end, though, what is most refreshing about Kramer is how *little* energy he devotes to matters of political doctrine. At bottom, what engages him chiefly is not his subjects' positions on this or that issue but their personal response to the great challenges of their age. Another way of putting this is to say that he is interested mostly in how we as individuals exercise moral choice. Of course, the presumption of autonomous moral agency is itself under question today—but that is all the more reason to welcome and to embrace these pungent, courageous, exhilarating essays by an indispensable spirit.

The Self-Made Founder

Alexander Hamilton: American
by Richard Brookhiser
Free Press. 240 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Richard A. Samuelson

To the extent that today's Americans remember Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804) at all, it is usually for the remarkable circumstances surrounding the beginning and end of his brief life. The future Founding Father was born, as his rival John Adams once bitterly remarked, "the bastard brat of a Scotch peddler," and he died by pistol shot, mortally wounded in a famous duel with Aaron Burr.

Richard Brookhiser does not deny the importance of these events, but he finds the brilliant career that came in between far more interesting. For Brookhiser, a senior editor at *National Review* and the author of *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington* (1996), Hamilton was both exemplar and prophet of a distinctively American creed. In this slim and elegantly written volume, Brookhiser sets out to show that, even at a distance of two centuries, the life of the most colorful and controversial member of the founding generation can still "guide and caution us."

Hamilton's story begins in the Caribbean, where his misfortune in being born out of wedlock was compounded by the desertion of his ne'er-do-well father—the black sheep of a distinguished family—and the early death of his mother. At eleven, he was in effect an orphan. Hamilton found a guardian, however, in Nicholas Cruger, a merchant on St. Croix to whom he was apprenticed, and the young lad so impressed Cruger and other local notables that they packed him off to New York at the age of fourteen to receive a proper education.

As a student in the mid-1770's at King's College (as Columbia University was then called), Hamilton shone as a speaker and pamphleteer in the resistance to British rule that culminated in the American Revolution. Having long dreamed of military glory—"I wish there was a war," he once declared in bored exasperation to a friend on St. Croix—Hamilton soon got his chance. He rose quickly in the Continental Army, achieving the rank of lieutenant-colonel and becoming aide-de-camp to George Washington,

Richard A. Samuelson *is a doctoral candidate in American history at the University of Virginia and a dissertation fellow at the International Center for Jefferson Studies.*

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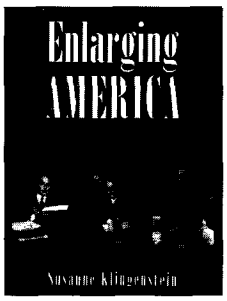

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who would remain his friend and patron.

Brookhiser emphasizes the nationalist stamp that these experiences left on Hamilton. As a recent immigrant at the center of a continent-wide struggle, Hamilton developed a broader political perspective than most of his contemporaries. Whereas other Americans had grown up thinking largely in terms of local attachments—invoking the rights and interests of, say, Virginia or Massachusetts—Hamilton always considered America a unit. This made him an especially acute critic of the Articles of Confederation, the toothless national charter under which Americans lived for much of the 1780's, and inspired him to help lead the charge for reform. As the architect and principal co-author of *The Federalist*, Hamilton was a key player in getting the U.S. Constitution written and ratified.

WHEN George Washington took the reins of the new government in 1789, he tapped his thirty-two-year-old confidant to be the first Secretary of the Treasury. As Brookhiser sees it, Hamilton's early-adolescent apprenticeship in commerce on St. Croix served him well in office, giving him an understanding of money far better than that of his gentlemanly peers. Hamilton hoped to structure the new nation's finances so as to unite the country more firmly and to stimulate manufacturing and commerce. To this end, he pushed successfully for a national bank and for federal bonds that would function as currency. Hamilton "proposed to turn the United States into a cash economy," Brookhiser observes. "He would lift it into capitalism . . . by creating capital."

The trouble with Hamilton's financial program in general, and with the Bank of the United States in particular, was that many Americans did not understand it. When they looked at the money markets created by Hamilton, they saw nothing but greedy swindlers making money as if by magic. This view, which was given political expression by the Republican party founded by Jefferson and Madison, soon made Hamilton's position uncomfortable. By 1795 he had quit his post at the Treasury.

Surveying the few remaining years of Hamilton's life, Brookhiser focuses on the personal cost of the great man's political passions. Though officially retired, Hamilton could not leave politics alone. He worked assiduously from the wings to guide the cabinet of President John Adams (unbeknownst to Adams) and continued to engage in political combat against his various foes. His law practice suffered, as did his family, which had already been put through the ordeal of his adulterous entanglement with Maria Reynolds (an affair that, for obvious reasons, has received much attention of late).

Eventually, as Brookhiser tells it, Hamilton's concern for the welfare of the new nation led to his tragic end. Considering Vice President Aaron Burr a supremely capable but utterly unprincipled man, Hamilton had foiled Burr's efforts to win the presidency in 1800 and the governorship of New York in 1804. Burr finally took umbrage, and challenged him to a duel. Opposed to dueling out of Christian scruple but also deeply attached to his public honor, Hamilton accepted, intentionally wasted his first shot, and was killed.

HOW DOES Brookhiser assess this complex man and his astonishing career? The key to Hamilton's character, he suggests, was his "all-pervading ardor"—a desire to show not simply that he was the smartest man around but that he was supremely useful, even indispensable. From this came Hamilton's energy, devotion to principle, and formidable powers of argument—but also, as Brookhiser shrewdly observes, his impatience and impolitic candor. As a member of Congress in 1783, at a time when sentiment for a strong national government had not yet formed, Hamilton boldly called for "national revenue collectors, pervading and uniting the States." James Madison, a fellow reformer but a superior politician, privately lamented this recklessness: "Mr. Hamilton had let out the secret."

Brookhiser traces these deficiencies in large part to Hamilton's having been the most self-made of the founders. Hamilton, he writes, "seems always in a hurry, and when he is not moving, he champs at the bit." In this, Hamilton was perhaps the first and most outstanding example of an enduring American type: ambitious, self-assured, and earnest to a fault, even to the point of self-destruction.

What sets Hamilton apart, Brookhiser argues, is that he drew principles from his own ascent. Although Hamilton appreciated the help he had received as an ill-starred youth, he also resented it. He believed that society should be arranged so that persons of talent could make their way on their own. As Brookhiser nicely puts it, "Most men who make it provide for their families, thank fortune, and maybe give to charity. Some raise the drawbridge behind them. Hamilton . . . wanted to generalize his experience."

The political program that flowed from this desire was a powerful alternative to that of Jefferson, whose class and background were very different. For Hamilton, merchants, cities, and money markets were symbols not of corruption but of opportunity and dynamism. They opened the door to aspiring Hamiltons everywhere, satisfying human needs that found little room in the landed society that Jefferson eulogized. Hamilton believed, as Brookhiser writes, in "economics as soul craft."

For this and other insights, Brookhiser's book is an informative and edifying introduction to an often misunderstood figure. Though there are more comprehensive accounts of Hamilton's life and times, none so forcefully reminds us of the abidingly American quality of his legacy.

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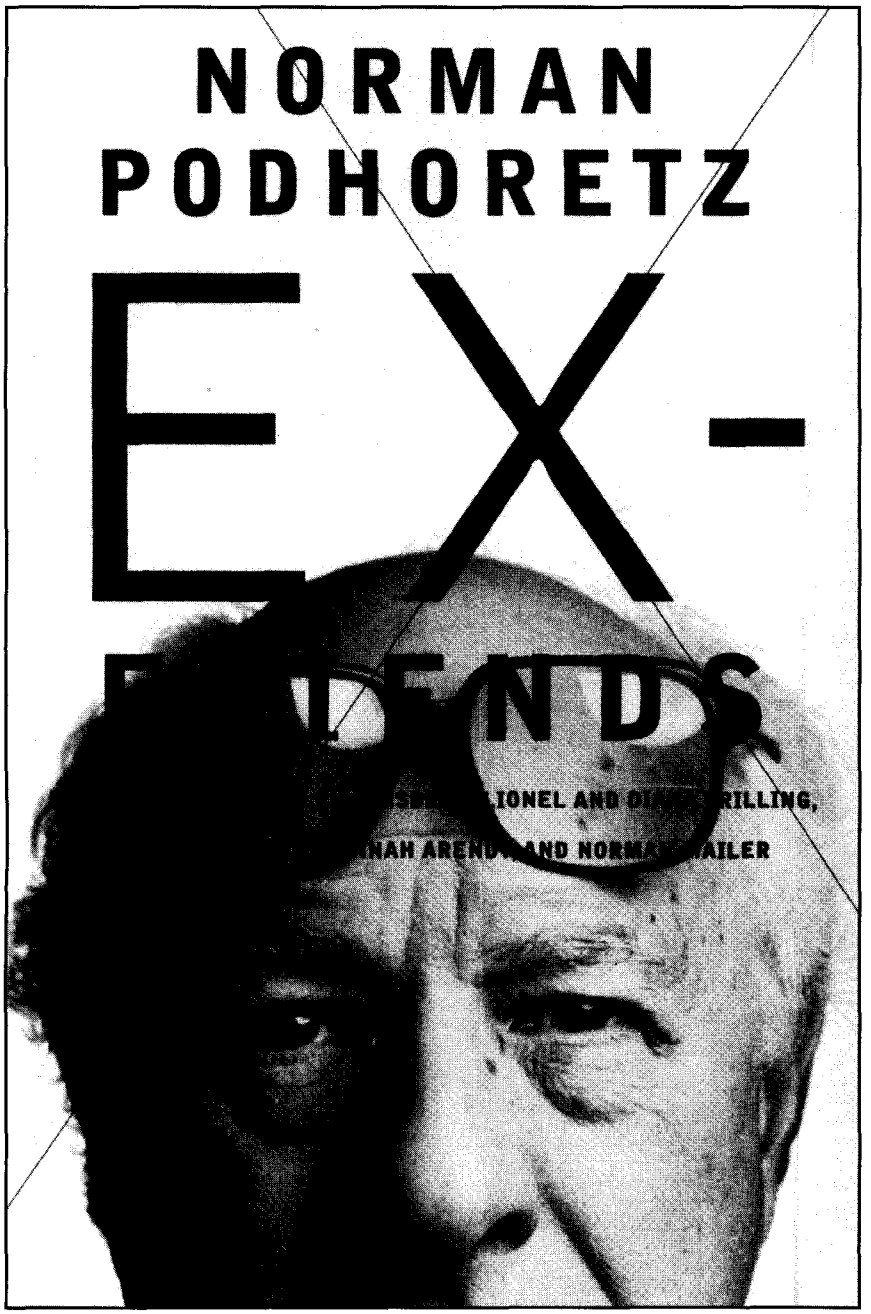

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Reviewed by
Algis Valiunas

THE ONLY way to become a poet of genius is to be born with a radiant gift. But even that is not enough: one must also be able to turn to artistic advantage whatever may chance in one's direction. Walt Whitman (1819-92) lived just the life he needed to make himself the bard of American democracy.

Jerome Loving, the author of four previous books on 19th-century American literature, finds the sources of Whitman's exemplary democratic sentiments in his having had a rough life. He started out common as dirt, and not even very good dirt, being the second of nine children born to an unsuccessful Long Island farmer who became an unsuccessful Brooklyn house-builder. After attending the only public school in Brooklyn—a despised charity school for the children of the poor—Whitman went to work as an office boy for a small law firm at the age of eleven. One of the lawyers tutored him in writing and bought him membership in a lending library—"the signal event of my life up to that time," Whitman would remember.

A couple of years later, the boy found a place in a newspaper printing office. Except for a miserable interlude as a small-town schoolmaster, Whitman would toil in the newspaper business into his thirties, graduating from printer to writer to editor. He was good at his trade, but journalism was not his vocation. Reading the Bible, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, the *Nibelungenlied*, Dante, and Shakespeare showed him the way his life would take.

Whitman set to work on *Leaves of Grass* in late 1854; henceforth, the usual ambitions had to yield to a consuming need. As Loving declares, "he practically walked away from his life to write his book." The first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, a rather slender volume of poems, appeared a year later, and Whitman added steadily to the collection over the years; by the seventh and so-called definitive edition of 1881, he had a hefty tome, over 400 pages long, comprising poems as various in length as they are in quality, from lapidary observations of a line or two to his longest and most famous poem, "Song of Myself."

The only thing that could really distract him from poetry was war. In December 1862, Whitman read in a New York newspaper that one of his brothers had been wounded at the battle of Fredericksburg, and the poet headed off to Virginia to find him. The suffering that Whitman witnessed—"*war-life*, the real article"—moved him to settle in Washington, D.C., and spend the rest of the Civil War as a volunteer nurse in the Union military hospitals. There, by his count, he ministered to over 100,000 wounded soldiers, some of whom became his devoted friends.

After the war, Whitman stayed on in the capital, earning his living as a lower-tier government bureaucrat. Then in 1873 he suffered the first of several strokes, and was never quite the same. Moving to Camden, New Jersey, a working-class suburb of Philadelphia, he lived a generally quiet life, continuing to write poems and essays and occasionally venturing forth to give lectures (mostly on Lincoln, whom he falsely claimed to have known).

As he grew old, he became some-

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thing of an eminence. Thomas Eakins painted him. Horace Traubel, the American Eckermann, recorded his conversation in several volumes. Oscar Wilde paid him court, and told courtiers of his own that he had left with Whitman's kiss upon his lips. (Homosexuals have recently claimed Whitman as one of their own, but Loving does not buy it.) At the age of seventy-two, he died of pneumonia, a complication of the tuberculosis he had been carrying since the Civil War.

Ordinary life, even low life, was the stuff of Whitman's poetry, and he found it near to hand. In the fate of certain members of his own family, Whitman saw, and felt, what life can do to those unfortunate enough to get inescapably on its wrong side. His elder brother was a violent alcoholic; his youngest brother was mentally retarded and lame; another brother's widow became a prostitute. Out of this misery, Loving suggests, came poetry of great power. The outcast, the degraded, the criminal, the wretched of every description were to enjoy prominent places at the egalitarian banquet Whitman's poetry advertised. There, in a democratically-minded improvement on New Testament teaching, everyone would be called, and everyone chosen:

> I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
> The kept woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,
> The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;
> There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

Whitman's ambition was to fill his poetry with as much life as it could possibly hold, but doing so required a poetic form more elastic and accommodating than traditional verse. According to Loving, the poet found the model for the formal liberty he was seeking in the art of supreme artifice: opera. "This kind of accompanied declamation," Loving writes, "in which the actors sing the words in irregular rhythms simulating speech, suggested to Whitman that words in a poem needed to sound the human rhythm of speech rather than the cadenced rhythm of traditional poetry." In bursting the constraints of rhyme and meter, Whitman invented a poetic form that embodied the same virtues he attributed to democracy and nature alike: namely, freedom and variety.

And what freedom and what variety. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville wrote that there is nothing so unpoetic as modern democratic life. Whitman's appointed task was to prove Tocqueville wrong: democracy would produce a poetry distinctively its own, and richer in its themes than that of the aristocratic past. Thus, in "Song of the Exposition," Whitman honors the American Muse, ever alert to the splendid in the humdrum:

> By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,
> Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial fertilizers,
> Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,
> She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

And in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," one of his best poems, he records the magnificence that, in a democracy, is always near to hand and that every human soul is somehow aware of:

> The glories strung like beads upon my smallest sights and hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,
> The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,
> The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,
> The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Whitman's greatness is in the intensity of those "smallest sights and

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hearings," in the determination to illuminate the stuff of everyday life with the certainty that the dustiest corner of creation holds its marvels—and that he, Walt Whitman, holds them, in his poetry, for the rest of us. As he vaunts in "Song of Myself": "I am large, I contain multitudes."

THAT IS a lot for any one man to contain, and sometimes Whitman staggers under the weight. His preaching of the sublimity of the lowest pleasures, the greatness of the heroic outlaw—most notably in such poems as "From Pent-Up Aching Rivers," "One Hour to Madness and Joy," "We Two, How Long We Were Fool'd," "Native Moments"—has had a pernicious influence: Henry Miller, William Burroughs, Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg are among those who took this doctrine to heart, and the damage they have done with it is incalculable.

There are other flaws, more subtle but just as serious. Whitman understands himself to be the greatest sage that democracy has produced, and in "Song of the Answerer" he lets everyone know how far his purview extends: "The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,/ His insight and power encircle things and the human race." He is also smugly certain that he comprehends the suffering soul, and in "Song of Myself" he is the first to say just how well he comprehends it, and how compassionate he is: "Agonies are one of my changes of garments./I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person." In fact, Whitman slips into and out of other people's agonies so easily, he hardly feels them at all:

> The disdain and calmness of martyrs,
> The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry wood, her children gazing on,
> The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat,
> The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the murderous buckshot and the bullets.
> All these I feel or am.

Scene-painting of this kind is vivid enough, in its lurid way, yet neither here nor anywhere else in Whitman's poetry is there even an inkling of what it really is to be a soul in torment, a soul in whose pain the universe seems to have concentrated all its capacity for evil. A man in agony needs to know why he is suffering, but Whitman lacks the power of imagination—of compassion in its highest form—to give evil its due; and so he comes nowhere near the remorseless sharpness with which the Book of Job or the poetry of Victor Hugo or the novels of Dostoevsky render and comprehend the world's pain. When he announces, in perhaps his most famous line, "I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there," one feels obliged to protest that he is not, he did not, he was not.

Yet if evil is not his natural element, goodness is, and exhilaration at life's sweetness his most winning mood. Moreover, even when he comes up short, extolling the supreme joys of living beyond good and evil, or making suffering disappear with a wave of the hand, he remains a rhetorician of such beguiling power that more often than not one feels the temptation to yield. To have this power is a dangerous gift; Whitman always uses it greatly, even if he does not always use it wisely.

Jerome Loving's biography ably relates the life from which the poetry was made, and is especially useful on the response to it by Whitman's contemporaries. Unfortunately, although he calls his book a critical biography, only intermittently does Loving have anything revealing to say about the poetry itself. But it is to the poetry that one should turn, and one should try to take it in large draughts. For there one will find in abundance America's glory and hope, its sorrow and its foolishness, its worst along with some of its very best.

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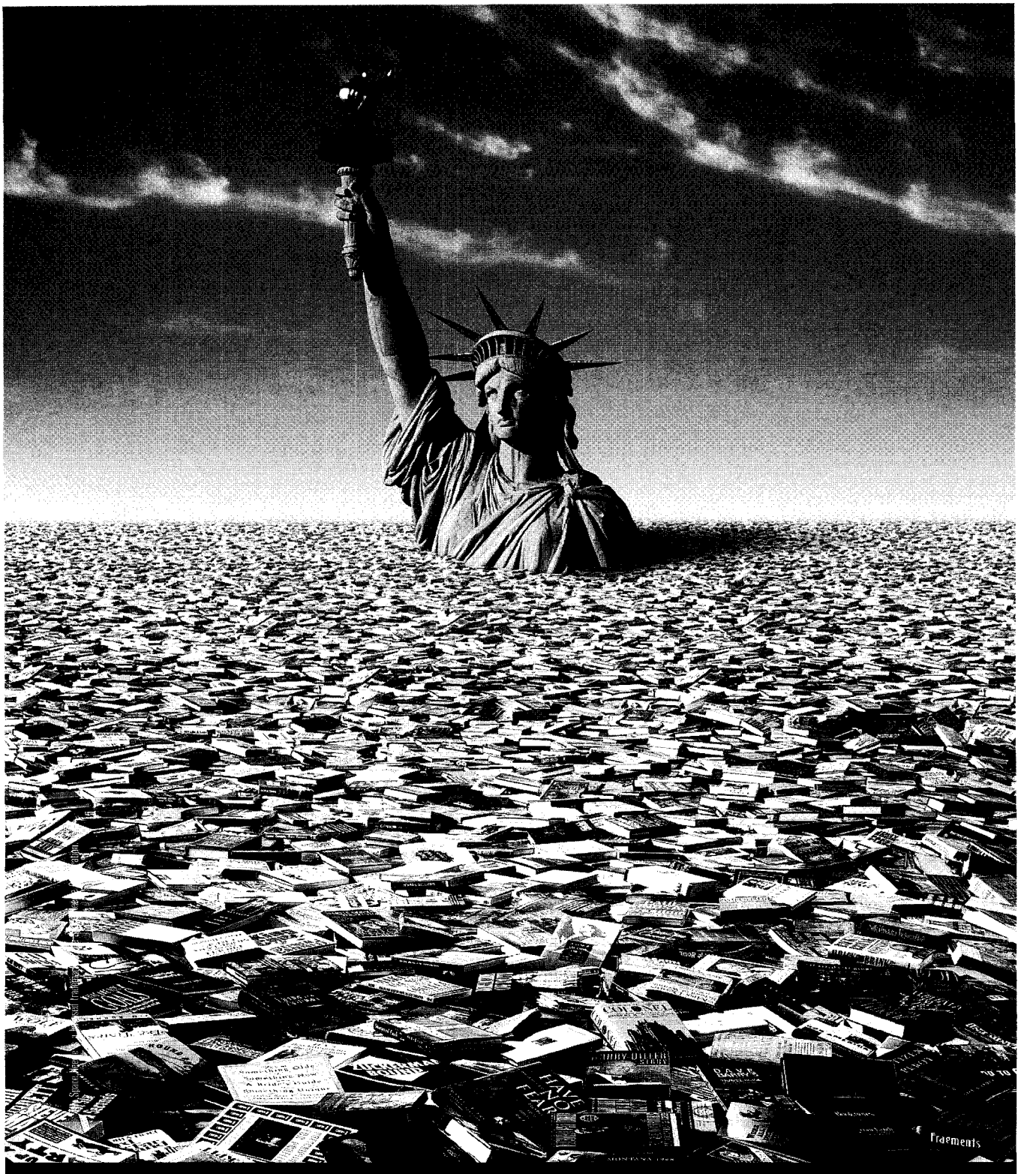

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